Rev. F. Zilius

THE SERMON OF THE SEA

AND OTHER STUDIES

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THE SERMON OF THE SEA

AND OTHER STUDIES

BY

REV. ROBERT KANE, S.J.

'Ces paroles paraîtront au lecteur froides et décolorées ; mais quand, au soir de l'automne, les feuilles tombent et gisent par terre, plus d'une main les cherchent encore, et fussent-elles dédaignées de tous le vent peut les emporter et en préparer une couche à quelque malheureux dont la Providence se souvient au haut du ciel.'

LACORDAIRE.

SIXTH IMPRESSION

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1913

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TO

UNKNOWN FRIENDS

We may not meet upon this crumbling earth,
Nor ever love within a day that dies.
Some distant sun upon thy path may rise,
Or unborn spring yet blossom with thy birth.
But thou,—when my chilled love droops faint for dearth
Of love,—art nigh ; and I,—when thy hope lies
Forlorn, thy faith forgot,—with spirit eyes,
Beckon thy thought to truth, thy will to worth.

For time, nor span of space, nor cloud nor clay
Can sunder souls. Twin Spirit! I am near
In brotherhood of soul, more close, more dear,
Than blood or love. Come! let me light thy way
Homeward ; until, through doubt and death, the Day
Shall dawn, when time and distance disappear.

ROBERT KANE, S.J.

PREFACE

THESE are studies in the sense that they are the outcome of much deep quiet thought.

This thought was always suggested by Nature. No idea has been borrowed from books. Some of these ideas will doubtless have been better put in the works of better men, but I am not conscious of having ever 'thrust my sickle into the harvest of another's field.' The subject-matter of these studies has been arranged so as to lead the attentive listener in a logical sequence of reflection, and I would therefore ask any willing mind whom they may meet to think them out in the actual order in which they have been set. They are not studies in the sense of being the result of mere desk-work. They were all written *currente calamo*. 'The Sermon of the Sea,' for instance, was written in two hours.

My 'candid' friends have sometimes accused me of literary affectation. To that I plead 'Not guilty.' In my young days I gave much time and toil to weaving words and moulding phrases. That was only an apprenticeship. When at last I ventured to speak

to men I thought only of what I had to say; but my own personal way of saying it, while it will have been remotely and indirectly influenced by my early literary drill, was yet, in its actual conscious utterance, only and altogether decided by the great thoughts which come to all men who reverently listen to Nature and to Nature's God. Under the absorbing inspiration of Nature, when I sought to outwardly express what I felt of its impetuous power, I spoke rather than wrote. Hence these studies were meant to reach the brain through the ear rather than through the eye. There is very much in this volume which I should like to correct were it possible for me to read and to linger over it with my pen and 'blotesquely' score it; but I am now blind and dictation does not mean writing. Many of these studies were afterwards made use of as lectures or sermons, but they were first composed only as expressions of what I personally thought and felt. I hope that they may be a help to some souls, and this is why I have yielded to the request of many friends that I should publish them.

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THE SERMON OF THE SEA

INTRODUCTION

MANY a time I had watched and listened to the sea on the soft, smooth beach of Killiney. Many a time, at Sandymount, I had gazed over the bare bleak sand when the waters had fled away and were faintly heard in the distance. Many a time I had lingered on the rocks at Sandycove while the tide rose or fell. Once, as I crossed the Atlantic, I had passed my days in reverent and loving study of the Ocean. It seemed to me that I had gradually learned to understand its language, and I could never grow weary of what the sea was saying to me. At last one day I chanced to hear again the 92nd Psalm. Suddenly the thought flashed upon my mind: Why not put into human words the Sermon of the Sea? I had no need to meditate; the sound of the sea was in my soul; my pen moved to its inspiration; and this is what I wrote.

The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods have lifted up their waves, with the noise of many waters.

Wonderful are the surges of the sea. Wonderful is the Lord upon the deep.—Ps. xcii. 3, 5.

By the sea-shore, on a quiet morning of summer, you will wonder at a changeful loveliness that never wearies; you will bow before a changeless Majesty that never grows familiar; and while, with dream-like spell the music of many-voiced waters lulls your senses to repose, there will break on your heart, in indefinite yet simple accents, strange sounds which you have often heard before, yet never so plainly as when listening to the Sermon of the Sea.

Each creature that His Hand hath made speaks of the greatness of God. The earth reiterates the teaching of His wisdom. The mountains shake with the terror of His name or lift up their peaks through the clouds in the stillness of contemplation. The forests bend and whisper in the awfulness of His presence. The sky reflects His splendour, or thunders forth His wrath. The adoring stars send their meditative light, with unimaginable speed, from fabulous distances, to bring to the weeping and wakeful eyes of mortal men the message of His watchfulness. But the sea, the glorious sea, with its subtle infinity of expression, with its portentous oneness of truth, speaks in

multitudinous utterances that blend for ever, into one living and lasting lesson, a sermon such as must fascinate the thoughtless and subdue the strong, the sermon of its surging depths.

Restless yet constant, yielding yet ruthless, liquid yet massive, bright yet deceitful, obedient yet overwhelming, beautiful yet murderous, the sea, the resounding fathomless sea, the lovely caressing sea, the mighty majestic sea, the terrible, the eternal sea, what are its wild waves saying? 'The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods have lifted up their waves, with the noise of many waters. Wonderful are the surges of the sea. Wonderful is the Lord upon the deep.' What is the message of the Ocean? Let me try to put into human words, faint and feeble echoes though they be of the full-voiced melody of the Ocean, something of what my heart hears when I listen to the Sermon of the Sea.

In the bright summer morning, as you stray along the strand, there is all around you a rapture of freshening air and an ecstasy of happy sunshine. Above you, in a faint infinity of blue, the sky reposes, and hidden somewhere in its heights a voice of a bird carols grateful Alleluias. Back from the shore rises and stretches the land, clothed with softest emerald, decked with wild flowers, breathing forth fragrance. Away back it stretches up to the purple-tinted mountains. But you cannot look back to the simple charm of the field, nor to the glory of the far-off peak, nor can you listen to the lark; for, before you, blue and deep and clear and strong, imperious in its fascinating beauty, absorbing in its solemn speech, like the living

shrine of a living heart, rises and falls in palpitating emotion the bosom of the illimitable sea. Over its restless waves you must look; across the glittering flash of its crests; across the tremulous sheen and shade of its hollows; across out away towards the horizon, where in a fairylike intercourse meet the uplifted sea and the stooping sky. You look beyond out towards the future, and you think of life. Like a child, in the morning of hope, straining eager eyes out over the glittering expanse of the world, you look towards the delicate haze, which, like a light veil on a beautiful face, hangs over the far-off waters, and, however well you know that the clouds are only vapour, you must yield to the enchantment of the distant mists. Away out over the waters to where the mists of the sea and the clouds of the sky are mingling their soft hues and their hollow seductions, your thoughts are wafted away in vague aspiration and dream. Gentle breezes fan your cheek. Dancing waves delight your eye. Laughing waters lull your ear. All your senses echo answer of your happy hopefulness, in the morning, in the sunshine, to the rippling beauty of the sea. Ah! In the loveliness of early light on the ocean, how much is only reflected glitter, how little there is of real colour! How much is due to the distance; how little is left of the green or the gold or the purple or scarlet or blue when you touch it with your hand! In the phantoms that clothe the future with charm how much is false, how little true; how much belongs to the vanishing fancies of dreamland! how little ever reaches to the reality of fact! Ah, 'if only youth had wisdom or if only age had strength!' How foolish we are in the days when we

might do good and great work! How feeble we are in the days when sad experience has forced us to think! In the morning we may do much if we understand the true worth of life. All the changing, shifting sands of circumstance, the strong cliffs that safely guard the harbour or the hidden rocks that lurk for shipwreck, the ebb or flood of influence, the adverse wind or favouring breeze, the lowering cloud or laughing sunshine, all these that make up our mortal years have a wisdom full of wonder when we meditate on their deep meaning in the presence of the mysterious sea. The more we think the more we are abashed in humility and awe, before the might and majesty of an unseen power that rules the tide of life.

'Then the Lord answered Job out of a whirlwind and said: Who is this that wrappeth up sentences in unskilful words? Gird up thy loins like a man; I will ask thee and answer thou Me. Where wast thou when the morning stars praised Me together, and all the sons of God made a joyful melody? Who shut up the sea with doors when it broke forth; when I made a cloud the garment thereof, and wrapped it in a mist? I set my bounds around it, and made it bars and doors, and I said, Hitherto thou shalt come and shalt go no further, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves. Didst thou since thy birth command the morning, and show the dawn of the day its place? Then Job answered the Lord and said: I know that Thou canst do all things, and no thought is hid from Thee.' There is an unseen power that can restrain the storm or ruffle the calm. There is an unheard wisdom that measures the inmost worth and weighs the most hidden work of man. This power is felt, and this

wisdom known, by those who draw aside from outward utterances, in order to hearken to the wordless thoughts of Nature, and ponder over the silent teaching of things.

By the sea-shore, on the sand, leave the world that is built of matter, leave the time that is made of days, and, heart to heart, with the throbbing Ocean, dwell awhile with its eternal thought, as you listen to the music of its message. On, on, comes the tide of the sea, steadily, ceaselessly, swelling and spreading, lifting along its multitudinous waters in merry little waves that curl and break with a crash on the sand and then slip back to the deep. On, in mustering strength they come and fall, and rush down again for more force. On they charge with a cry of encouragement, back they stagger with a sigh of despair. What do the waves mean by their contest of surge? what do they say in defeat? Listen! What is the word of the wave as its crest breaks across? what is its speech as it hurries away? What is its voice till it meets control? what as it fails and declines? Listen! for the waves are saying: 'Thou must conquer or thou shalt die.'

Look forth over the mighty Ocean, and learn the secret of its power. Its wide empire is made up of waves. Each wave is made up of drops of water. Each drop is made up of liquid atoms. If you would be great, be like the sea. Let the tiniest acts of your daily hours gather their insignificant strength into the little wave of a well-spent day. Let your days, through their varying flow, be they fretted or tranquil, swell into broad billows of months. Let your months widen out over horizons of years. Then your years, with infinite cohesion of trifles, like drops, will

exult in a life-tide of good, pure and clear, and deep and strong like the sea. But if your days are scattered like spray that is drained by the sand or dried by the sun, whatever is left of your life will gather in stagnant pools, without health because without movement, without strength because without unity. The sea is fresh and majestic by the motion and union of many waters. Your life must be gathered of infinite atoms of good, stirred and strengthened into one boundless and magnanimous motive. Learn from the sea as its mimic wavelets pleasantly break on the strand: 'Thou must conquer or thou shalt die.'

Watch yet awhile, as a passing shadow of cloud or a rough touch of the inconstant breeze brings a ruffled frown on the face of the sea. Watch, for you must know the dangerous temper of the tide. Watch the exquisite sea! How the shining folds of its long, long coils wreathe themselves on with the undulous grace of strength that is smooth! How pretty the play of the light on the crystalline hues of its scales, as it glides from shadow to sun, as it basks in the glare or hides in the hollow! How gentle the caress of the sea as it tremulously touches your hand when you stoop on the beach to feel its fond freshness! How mighty the force of its stealthy step as the big ships rise and fall to keep time with the restless breathing of its depths! Its depths! how clear they are, yet how terrible! but where are the beautiful ships that once sailed over the sea? And where are the brave hearts that once embarked on life? Watch the bright and beautiful coils of the sea! Watch the soft deep folds of the sea! O serpent-like sea! O murderous sea! Sea! sea! give up thy dead!

But the waves that woo the weak to their ruin and that bear up the strength of the strong, make answer with clamorous surf and with rippling reply: 'We are waters that wreck if we be not conquered. Like traitorous serpent we sting if you sleep. If you sink, we will strike with pitiless fang, and with pitiless fold we will crush you to death. But we are true to the brave, we are slaves to the strong. Thou must conquer or thou shalt die.'

Away, away from the shore, back over the sand with quieter tread of retiring feet, with fainter pulsation of waves that are weary, the tide goes out to the sea; and like the morning hope of our youth, like its freshness, its promise, its dream, the bright, laughing, exultant waters, with their sunshine and music, leave us on the bleak shore alone. Then from the distance, like a warning voice from the dead, comes an echo of innumerable lives, like the sound of the sea: 'Thou must conquer or thou shalt die.' 'The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice, the floods have lifted up their waves, with the noise of many waters. Wonderful are the surges of the sea. Wonderful is the Lord upon the deep.'

Pass on further to where the rocks gird the shore. You will learn another lesson from the changeful surface, but changeless life of the constant sea. When the hour comes the sea with patient and steady step recedes. Not in headlong flight of panic nor in the fretful hurry of disappointment, but like a man of brave and resolute character who yields to circumstance yet firmly and quietly waits for the turning of the tide, so the majestic sea, slowly in a calm retreat, strongly in a concentrated respiration, waits. Its

curling crests forsake the topmost rocks. Its gurgling inflow leaves the clefts. The massive pillars of the shore, one after another, lift their Titan heads, with straggling and dripping mane of seaweed, above the baffled brine; but the patient sea yields and waits. Then the hour comes and the patient sea returns, not with foolhardy bound of over-eagerness, nor with frantic security of triumph, but with steady, gradual growth of gathered energy, the patient sea that had waited patiently comes back. Its waters are poured with solemn stride round the base of the cliff. They come and they go in their serried ranks with the resistless tread of veteran troops. They come and they go with their outposts examining each crevice and nook below. Onward they pour their marshalled columns; then upward they climb with impetuous charge that is under control, with careful advance that is valiant. On with a hurling and hurtling shock; up with the seething foam. On with a thundering shout; up with a hardy cheer. On with billows that boom like guns; up with spray that rattles like musketry. On the majestic sea sends its deep battalions; up, up, the steady sea sends its triumphing vanguard. On and up the great sea comes, with a deafening chorus and a clear ringing solo, singing a brave melody that is one and the same for ever, yet for ever in varying harmony: 'Thou must conquer or thou shalt die.'

Thou canst not always dream in the sunshine on the shore. Morning passes and the day's work must be done. Be it for good or be it for ill, thou must launch forth thy life on the deep sea. As the first big waves of the wild ocean lift you aloft with gigantic heave, and then let you sink in a swift smooth pause,

a feeling you never have felt before rises and falls in your heart in an alternating rhythm of courage and awe. You realise, as never before when you looked at it, the tremendous might of the massive waters that balance or shake huge ships with the slightest poise of their billows. Yet you know, as never you had known before, the magnificent courage that can enable the weakness of mortals to walk upon the waves. Thus with humble reverence for the giant-like grasp of the upbearing brine, and with bowed down awe for the king-like glory of its white crowned crests, you understand in a new and mysterious way the ethereal power and dignity of a soul; and you repeat to yourself a refrain of the ocean, half self-given warning, half worshipful prayer: 'Thou must conquer or thou shalt die!'

See the ship in full sail. Her stout beams breast the foaming salt. Her prow with the sturdy strength of the heart of oak, with the graceful curves of a budding flower, cleaves through the curling waves that play round its passage in white foam-wreaths and sparkling spray-fountains. Her sails are smooth and pure as the plumage of the white sea-bird that spreads its wings on the breeze or floats on the dark-green water. The slender spars point steadily to the sky and are reflected in trembling lines below. No trace of clay stains her onward course; no tarnish of dust soils her immaterial movement. With a beauty that is braced to sailor hardihood, with a loveliness fresh as the free wind, brave and dauntless as stormy petrel, like a vision of purity, the white winged ship sails over the inviolate sea. Like a vision of purity, too, there dawns in your thought a revelation of true love. The

passions that surge with tumultuous upheaval in your soul, and the instincts that blow like loosened winds on your life, these are the forces which, if controlled, shall bear you safely to harbour; and these are the forces which shall bring you to wreck, if you yield to their whim or follow their flood. Sail over the sea with a heart that is strong in its purity, with a love that is resolute in its course under the guidance of the faithful stars. Hold to the helm steadily. Use the breeze wisely. Face the waves manfully. Like a life of beauty that is pure and strong, sail over the sea. Its hoarse billows shout, and its breezes whisper: 'Thou must conquer or thou shalt die!'

But there are perils of Ocean. Watchful and indomitable courage makes the hardy sailor. The masterful strength of the eager steam breaks through the waves in the teeth of the wind. Incessantly fixing their onward steps, incessantly whirling their backward strokes, the engines rush on in panting haste, leaving behind them a white road of foam which they have crushed on their path. The face of the sea grows black with anger, and gleams of white rage appear on its brow. The winds shriek out in wrath amidst the rigging, or mutter hoarse threats against the venturesome foe that thus defiantly faces them. Uplifted mountains of massive water charge on the ship to overwhelm her, but she with quick bound climbs up their side and severs their crest with fearless prow. Back down away the wave leaps, and opens a precipice to engulf the ship, but she swiftly glides down the slope, yet stops, when the treacherous waters would pour over her there, and lifts herself up with unconquered force, shaking from around and above

her the hounding waves that had leapt on her deck. Blacker and whiter grow the depths and the ridges, the giddy chasms, and the avalanche masses of black brine and white foam. Louder and fiercer grows the hurricane. A seething, tossing, whirling abyss below; a tearing, frantic gale above; around, a savage spray that beats from the clouds, a savage hail that smites from the sea, a loosened frenzy of spirit-like powers mingled of ocean, of sky, and of air. Through air, through sky, or through ocean, through the demon-like fury of one or of all breaks or bursts or bounds the brave steam. With heart that beats with the desperate energy of a fight for life, with breath that pants in a struggle with death, shuddering and groaning with the strain of her nerves, yet never slackening her grasp nor staying her step; trembling and staggering under the violence of the blows she receives, yet dauntlessly facing the storm and triumphantly striving with the sea, the brave steamship holds on her way. Ha! in the shrillest shriek or most ruthless shock of the maddened sea was heard an eternal voice of warning to cowards, of praise to the brave: 'Thou must conquer or thou shalt die.'

If you are not brave in life you shall perish in the sea. Look out cautiously through the long watches of the night, when the heavens are wrapped in chill and dismal gloom. Cautiously, patiently, steadily look to the compass; quietly, cautiously, hold to your course. You will pass through the fog and the mist, and the rain and the night, but watch with the courage of caution, with the valour of patience. Be brave in your watchfulness. Be brave, too, in discipline. Rule the wild crew that will yield you readily magnificent

service if you are masterful. Rule those ferocious animal instincts that will make you the sport of their cruelty, if you do not make them the slaves of your stern and inexorable despotism. Wherefore, be brave in watchfulness against perils from without. Be brave in discipline against perils from within. Then you may safely face the storm, for God has given you a soul beautiful in its purity, matchless in its strength. Do thou brightly guide and bravely man thy bark. Thus shalt thou venture forth on life; thus shalt thou launch forth on the deep sea. For listen: 'Thou must conquer or thou shalt die.' 'The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods have lifted up their waves, with the noise of many waters. Wonderful are the surges of the sea. Wonderful is the Lord upon the deep.' The tempest has bounds set to its fury and reins to the fierceness of its speed. Life may often and sometimes must be tossed with the wild tumult of temptation or lashed to paroxysms of angry pain by reiterated strokes of trial; but when we are overwhelmed with merciless waters, while even Providence seems to sleep, if only we are faithful in the worst of our fear and brave in the worst of our weakness, our clamorous prayer will awaken the Christ, Who, rising up, will command the winds and the sea, and presently there shall come a great calm.[1] 'Wonderful are the surges of the sea. Wonderful is the Lord upon the deep.' In God's own time, and in God's own way, it shall be given to us to understand that, although His eyes seemed closed

[1] O Lord God of Hosts! Who is like to Thee? Thou art mighty, O Lord, and Thy truth is round about Thee. Thou rulest the power of the sea and appeasest the motions of the waters thereof.

in heedless sleep while we were perishing in the storm, yet His heart was ever wakeful and watchful. If we are watchful and brave we shall realise in the end that our contests have brought us triumph and that we are 'homeward bound.'

The long billows still roll in their mountain-like curves, but their surface seems smoother and their motion more mild. The wind is still lusty, but its breath seems to bear a faint fragrance as if it had tripped over fresh fields or gambolled through forests. All eyes are eagerly peering forward into the distance. All lips are parted, yet silent in expectant hope. Then a ringing cry breaks the spell and all voices are merrily repeating: Land! Land! The time is quite short till the sea is quite smooth. The hills, then the landscape, have risen out of the waves. There are indistinct signs in the distance of welcome. Then, as the ship swiftly glides over the mirror-like water, eyes beam with a soft dew of happiness and hearts are throbbing with their loudest and warmest beatings of love, when, after long parting, friends catch the first sight of the faces of friends. At last! . . . One day your voyage shall end with its pleasant dreams and sunshine at the starting of your youth, with its bright hours of calm and its terrible hours of peril on the deep sea. One day you shall approach the everlasting shore. At last out over the horizon there shall be lifted up the hills that shall not be moved for ever. At last the clouds shall be rolled aside; a vision of peace and rest shall dawn upon you for ever and ever more; the loves you had lost shall be given back to you; your heart will be happy and your soul content as you catch the first glimpse of Paradise.

That is the ideal, with its inevitable warning, with

its imperious call. That is the message echoed in Ocean music. That is the Sermon of the Sea. But, when with actual effort you endeavour to reproduce in living, breathing reality of fact the faint far vision of your dream; when hurried by swift time away from the playful beach and soft safe shallows of childhood's shore you have now no horizon but the near yet receding circle of sea and sky; when you are out, out, away upon the deep, you find life so vague, so vast, so intangible, so irresistible, so cruel in its storm, so seductive in its calm, so full of treachery in the yielding of its abyss, so fraught with terror in the crashing of its cataracts; you find yourself so powerless against a foe that slips through your fingers if you would seize it, yet hurls you about with solid grasp; that mocks your blow with liquid laughter, yet stuns your strength with stroke like steel; you find yourself so feeble, with no footing for your step and no holding for your hand, so faint with exhaustion, so numb with chill, so fearful alone mid the wilderness of waves, lost in the engulfing waters, hid in the horrible darkness, that if God do not come to your aid you must perish. 'Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto my soul. I am come into the depths of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me. Deliver me from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the tempest of water drown me nor the deep swallow me up. I am poor and sorrowful. O Lord God do not Thou forsake me!'

Lo! through the dark, through the spray, through the storm, with a glory around like the light of the day, with a calm like the stillness of slumber, with a presence more noble than angel, comes your Redeemer. Over the yielding billows He comes, as though His feet were

on the heather of the mountain, not on the hollows of the deep. Masterful, He moves through the shrinking spray; kinglike He commands the silenced gale. He is by you. He upholds you. 'O thou of little faith why didst thou doubt?' 'Thou art mighty, O Lord, and Thy truth is round about Thee; Thou rulest the power of the sea and appeasest the motion of the waves thereof. Wonderful are the surges of the sea. Wonderful is the Lord upon the deep.'

Yet one moment more, ere you leave the resounding sea listen to its latest message. What shall we liken to its music? Lapping with its pleasant waters underneath the happy passage of the keel, softly smoothening out its wavelets to support the gliding sides, gurgling in its merry frolic round about the prow, with smiles reflected through its transparent rainbows, with laughter echoed in every little ripple that capriciously mimics the big waves, with a musical melody that is full and sonorous, with a harmony clear voiced yet tender, many motived, yet combining into one song of soul, the sea speaks to you. Up it clashes in strong concert; down it sinks in murmured strain. On it comes in crowding circles; back it reclines with happy sigh. Listen! Now the sea is saying: 'Thou hast conquered, thou shalt never die.'

'The Lord hath reigned; He is clothed with beauty; the Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded Himself, for He hath established the world which shall not be moved for ever. Thy throne is prepared from of old. Thou art from everlasting. The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods have lifted up their waves, with the noise of many waters. Wonderful are the surges of the sea. Wonderful is the Lord upon the deep.'

NEARNESS TO GOD

When, in some far solitude, no distant hum of busy toil or restless pleasure is heard, when not the faintest echo of a voice is whispered by the breeze, when even such vague remembrances of human life as throb with subtle undulations through the country air have spent their last ripple, when all else is still, the soul must hearken to the sound within itself that ceaselessly utters in spiritual thought the truth it sees face to face alone with Nature. As the chatter, bustle, din, and roar of cities pause, then fail, then die away in distance, the silence of time is filled with the words of eternity; the absence of Art leaves room for the presence of Nature; the willing or unwilling withdrawal from man wins or forces the mind into nearness with God.

Or, when, in the dark of the night, slumber will not come, and seriousness will not go; when the phantoms of our active hours, the pushing cares and the clashing interests and the giddy delights have ceased to shout or laugh, have stopped in their whirl or dance; when all our toys are still and silent, staring at us with sightless doll eyes, and smiling at us with lifeless doll lips; when the truths that are from always to always frown upon us with eternal reproach or beckon to us with eternal warning, we cannot escape into

foolishness, for we are held in the grasp of evident reality.

In the solitude and in the silence thought travels freely up and down. It does not need to pass from point to point, but with one glance rests upon the moving clouds, then, with one flash sets its face against the mysterious bars of the unending blue above. It leaves the dim horizon far behind and is already within the infinite recesses of all the possibilities of space. In solitude and in silence thought searches for truth that it cannot find in the span of dying lives, in the circle of passing goods. It must go further forth to find what was before and what shall come hereafter.

When thought looks out above the world, beyond the past, it wanders from fact to truth, from truth to fact, knowing that all are false if there has been no First, that all were not if there be not One Who Is. Then all the solitude is thronged with facts, and all the silence is eloquent with truths, for the soul sees and hears the first and final Word of all : ' In the beginning was the Word.'

In the deep rest of such a thought, a great Latin saint—Hilary—said, ' What meaneth what is said " In the beginning was the Word ? " Human measurements of time are laid aside. The ages have been passed by. The centuries have ceased to count. Mark any period that thou wilt as some fixed point from which to start. Make this the uttermost limit of thy thought. Thou hast not caught the faintest echo of the first Word that was. He is beyond time. He was, of Whom we speak. He was before all time, Who is the Word.' In like manner, Basil, one of the great Greek saints whose lives are landmarks of Christianity,

wrote : ' Never can the subtlest thought escape from the final message of the past ; nor can the fastest fancy outstrip the infinite recedings of that beginning in which the Word was. For however much thy mind speeds back beyond what came before, it can find no outlet whereby to avoid the Word of Whom it is ever true, " He ever was." Thus, however much thou strive to see what could have been beyond the Word, yet thou canst never get behind that which in the beginning was.'

The light of this truth has never failed to illumine the lofty intellects of the world. It is only the clever chatterers who are blinded by the dust of matter and deafened by the din of time. But the simple who can think alone, and the humble who can be silent, who are not drunk with pride or passion, behold with honest eyes the first teachings of Nature ; while the minds that from the serene and quiet heights of contemplative wisdom look the universe through and through, return, from scientific search or logical pursuit, to rest again in the thought of those very truths which the slow rustic finds in the furrow of his plough, or which the lonely shepherd learns as he tends his flock.

Thus the untaught child of toil, with the evidence of intuition sees, in the ebb and flow of things and time the changeless presence of the Eternal One. Thus the subtlest teacher of human thought, Aristotle, with the grasp of genius, gathered into one word the wisdom of the world, saying : ' A beginning that had a beginning cannot have been the first beginning of reality.'

The thought of the eternal past, fathomless yet full, impenetrable yet plain, boundless yet unbroken,

gathers from all its infinite horizons one simple yet unutterable consciousness that it is in the presence of God.

He Who Is is everywhere. As His name is written in the record of all reality that has been, so upon His word awaits all reality that shall be. As all fact that has gone before stretches back to rest its very possibility upon a necessity that needs no beginning, so that all shall be hereafter real within the hollow future leans upon a principle that can have no end. From both, from infinite past and from infinite future, follows an infinite Now. From eternity to eternity our Infinite God is near.

Not with a noise that agitates the air, but with a sound that shakes the soul, Nature proclaims the presence of God.

With an inundation of teaching, silent as the sunshine yet as dazzlingly clear; with a deluge of truth, liquid as the ocean yet as bracingly strong, the great thought of the great Presence surrounds and envelopes and brightens and upbears us. There is an eloquence in all His works more full than any words of men. There is an appeal in each one of His images more potent than any created charm. He is present in the blue heavens, but their splendours grow dim when we think of the beauty of His face. He is present in the solid earth, but its strength seems to vanish from beneath our feet when we think of the omnipotence of His hand. He is present in the laughing waters, in the chorus of the cataract, in the hosannas of the sea, in the sad songs of the pine-woods, and in the rapturous melodies of the birds; but all these sounds grow still and all their harmonies fail when we listen

to the accents of His voice. He is present in the majesty of the mountain and in the fertility of the plain, in the changefulness of the seasons and in the steadfastness of the stars; but all their greatness droops and disappears when we realise that the King is here. He is present in the exquisite colours of the orchid, in the lowlier charms of the violet, in the transcendent purity of the lily, in the tender loveliness of the rose, in the noblest grace of living form, in the incarnate fairness of breathing feature, in the worshipful excellence of character, and in the most lovable devotedness of a heart; but all this beauty pales and withers when we truly know that God is near. It is not that these things are not admirable and good, but they are such poor tokens, such feeble types, such dull images of what He is, that when they come before us as the outward signs of His reality, as the material raiment of His royalty, as the earth-made veil of His perfection, as the nearing shadow of His approach, we can no longer look upon His semblance nor love His likeness when we see the very glory of Himself. He is around us in all things; He is within us in all thought; He is above us in all greatness; He is within us in all worth; He is beneath us in all support; He is within us in all virtue; He is about us in all true happiness; He is within us in all right love. He is in us. Nay, rather, we are in Him. In Him we have our being, for we are in His hand. In Him we move, for we are in His thought. In Him we live, for we are in His love.

Touched by this great truth the poet-prophet of the great heart sang: 'Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I

ascend into heaven, Thou art there ; if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. And I said : " Perhaps darkness shall cover me, and night shall be my light in my pleasures." But darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be as light as the day ; the darkness thereof and the light thereof are alike to Thee. I will praise Thee, for Thou art fearfully magnified. . . . I rose up and am still with Thee.' (Ps. 138.)

Yet why should we fly from Him ? He is our Father. There is a likeness in our race, not chiselled in marble form of flowing line or stately curve, nor coloured to reflect the hue or tone of mere material feature, but wrought into the very essence of our spiritual powers, and lit in the very brightness of our thought, and kindled in the very burning of our love by the touch and warmth of the breathing life of God. His is the image stamped within our soul. His is the ideal mirrored in our mind. His is the type that works within our will.

However fallen from our high heritage, however maimed by foolishness, deformed by fault, crippled by misuse of knowledge, or paralysed by misuse of will, we bear within us still the tokens of our lineage, the marks of our destiny, the character of our nobility, so that, before creation, we are ever, even though we should be castaways, known to be the children of our Father-God. Hence in our guilt His anger frowns upon us, not from afar, but with an overhanging cloud of wrath it spreads over all our day, settles upon our soul, penetrates through our innermost self, chilling our

life with the touch of eternal death, and darkening our hope with the gloom of eternal despair. Hence, in our righteousness, His smile comes from within our soul. Not like the sunshine, which, from the bright sun, ripples through all the gladdened air until it glints and glances with merry curve and playful bound over every homely detail that comes across its path, but like the sturdy throb of heart that beats within, and shows itself without by ruddy cheek or sprightly step ; or like the exultant sense of youth, which, from the out-welling source of its own energy, gives a bracing freshness to life that was drear, throws a glory of sunset round failure, shows the glimmer of dawn in the gloom of the night, sees with clear eyes whatever is good, and with kind eyes pities whatever is wrong : so the smile of God is a sunshine which from within the soul sheds the light of God's promise upon all that we live for, and upon all that we love showers God's benediction.

In the wide strange world made up of human lives there is a ceaseless chatter of outside intercourse and an unbroken silence of the soul. Men come and go in multitudes, live without mutual knowledge, and die without mutual regret. Faces pass unheeded, and, even of the faces that are familiar, few have a message in their glance that brings a definite or lasting meaning to our mind. Most people are to our life only like shadows ; their presence is only real to us as are the unsubstantial clouds. We know that they are there when we see the rising mists of passing pleasure or the drooping vapours of passing pain. We feel that the vague floating phantom-like lives around us are indeed real when our heart is blackened, charred, and blasted by a fire more devastating than the lightning, or when

our soul is softened and made beautiful by mists that bring to us from heaven a blessing more precious than the rain.

Yet there are some lives that live within our own. There are some whose thoughts are closely interwoven in our mind, so that our very sight borrows its tone and its perspective from the light and standpoint of their view. Their hearts with magnetic spell may calm the beatings of our blood, or they may quicken them with sympathetic stroke until their hot pulsations fret and chafe away our strength with fever, or they may multiply their mysterious currents in the vigour of our arm and in the staunchness of our will.

Such a presence is not mere nearness in space. It is nearness in life. Such a presence, near or far, is truly with us. A presence that brushes by us in the street may be divided from our life by a distance that is eternal and measureless. A presence that is severed from us by a frontier of impassable peaks, a continent of desert, or a world of waves, may yet be at our side in the secret meeting-place of souls. It outstrips space and outlives time. Nay, it may be a living and potent factor in our life when men think that it is dead. It may breathe its actual message into our inward ear and win its actual wish from our full heart, as truly as though its lips trembled or its heart throbbed, even when those lips and heart were laid long years ago in a grave that is as silent as the midnight stars and as still as the cold granite of its tombstone.

Now there is a nearness in life that is inseparable from identity of blood. There may not be much love, there may even be hatred between those that have one father; but their lives can never be apart as those

whose blood is not the same. The nearness of life which is of love may be greater or it may be less than the nearness that is of blood. Both bonds may join their strength to unite, or may interpose with violence to sever. But blood in a mysterious way, neither to be expressed by words nor to be explained by wisdom, does make lives near.

Wherefore, our father's life, for good or evil, is present in our life. The greatest curse a child can have is a bad mother. Next to this curse, in intensity of horror and in extent of evil, is a bad father. Poets and preachers speak of a mother's love as though a father's love could not compare with it. This may be true. Yet, however this may be, we cannot doubt but that if the two were joined in one great love as strong as it is tender, as masterful as it is gentle, as resolute as it is delicate, as far-seeing as it is quick, as provident as it is sympathetic, we should indeed have a love that is near to our life. And if this great love were swollen with all the torrents that the first deep strings of nature can fill with outpouring affection, as well as with all the tributes of tenderness that choice can bring from afar to let fall in sweet showers of sympathy, we should have a life-current mingling most strongly and most thoroughly with our own.

Our souls have come forth from the breath of God, in the very likeness of His own Spirit. In the serene world in which spirits dwell, where substance is thought, where there is no food but knowledge, no force but love, there can be no birth like the budding of a flower, no death like the parching of a leaf. A spirit can have no mother but Eternal Truth, no father but Uncreated Love. God is Truth and Love.

Wherefore our spirit has been breathed forth by the Spirit of God, with the living likeness of His own nature breathing within its living substance. In the innermost source of what is our own true self there is the true character of kinship with our own true Father; and in the birth of our own intellectual thought there is the very image of His own Eternal Son; and in the giving of our own devotedness there is the created counterpart of His own uncreated love. Wherefore, our Father-God is very near within our life.

Beyond this nearness to God, which comes from our kinship with Him, there is another nearness more true in itself and more worthy of a soul. The nearness of our spiritual nature is a nearness of race, of birth, a nearness not sought nor chosen, and therefore a nearness in some sense dead. But beyond that nearness there is a nearness of love—a nearness that is known and chosen, and therefore a nearness in its most noble sense, a living nearness of life. For, in a spirit, that is most truly living which is most truly the thinking of its thought and the breathing of its love. Now a spirit, without its own thought or choice, is sent forth into life in order that, by its own thought and choice, it may come back unto God's life. A spirit is sent forth by its Father into life, dowered with great gifts, but as yet enriched with no prizes that are the crown of merit, strengthened by no toil that is proof of courage, beautified by no worth that is the result of virtue, in order that, winning its own greatness, developing its own power, creating its own glory, it may not only by inherent likeness of nature, but by self-given likeness of choice, draw near until it is most like by love to God.

Not place but likeness makes us near to God, and love makes like. Listen to St. Prosper: 'Not through any distance from spot to spot do we approach towards God or wander from Him; but likeness with Him makes us near to Him, unlikeness leaves us far away.' Now listen to a thought of St. Augustine: 'God draws me towards Him, not by chain of metal or strand of strength; but by His love He draws me. For the love within me is as a weight which ever presses me and drags me on through the infinite spaces of the spirit to the great centre of all love, to the one great loadstone of my life. My love is my weight.'

What is this union which, with the immaterial bond of tenderness and with the mysterious spell of sympathy, can join two spirits in one life? That it can come from kindred in nature we know. That it can also come from the likeness wrought within them by one love we also know. But, as the philosophic words which tell us why the threads of nature should closely draw together the hearts of father and of child, fail utterly to bring a clear or thorough meaning to our mind, so, when wise men explain why friends are friends, why love makes like, and what this most strange power is that attunes two souls to perfect unison of thought, and charms two hearts to beat or pause, to swell or sink, in the harmony of the same love-song, we cannot understand the reason of it, for it is too deep and full of feeling; but we can understand the fact, for it vibrates through our inmost being and lifts us in a rushing impulse outwards and upwards from our own self.

Yet through the shadows of earthen images we can discern some figure of the truth, and even in the

twilight of our human knowledge we can recognise the stronger colours of reality. Thus, we understand that 'Love,' in the words of the great St. Denis, 'is a force of union.' It is a force that comes from a union of power, and it is a force that tends towards union of presence. Hence, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, love is founded on a union that is either a sameness of kind or a similarity of choice. It works through a union that is an identity of aim and a fellowship of wish. It results in a union that includes the interchange of every gift, because it is, above all and in itself, a union in the very power of giving, by the mutual gift, as far as this can be, of the very self that loves. How near this presence is that awaits us in the very object of our thought and meets us in the very motive of our will, that makes us live another life within the mind and heart that loves us, that brings a different life within ourselves, so that we do not think our thoughts alone, nor is our own wish only ours but also another's! Our soul becomes a shrine where reverence bows before an image nobler than ourselves, a sanctuary where tenderness can gain a sacred strength to do great deeds we could not dare alone, and live a life above ourselves—unselfish, pure, devoted, because it is a life of love.

Now there is a Life of Love within our life that we think little of. He holds the ground beneath our feet, and spreads the heavens above our head. He works within each blade of grass, and lifts the sap within the trees. He rests within each drop of dew, and fetches us from afar each tiny atom of vapour which He has purified from its stinging salt and gathered from the Southern Sea. His touch is in the breathing of

the breeze. His voice is in the singing of the bird. He shakes with freshening tide the fathomless waters of the ocean. He steadies with patient labour the veins within the marble and the crystals of diamonds. He gives each bird or beast or moving thing within the seas its speed or strength or subtlety. Within all lifeless things He works with living energy. Within all living things He lives with energetic love. This usefulness, this beauty, and this worth, these are His gifts to win our love. Then this love enters into our life. It gives its warmth to our blood. It measures the movement of our heart. It guides the eddyings of our brain. It penetrates within our soul, giving all reality to its substance, thinking within its thought, willing within its will. From within ourselves this love looks forth, seeing beyond the eternity that is past, seeing beyond the eternity that is to come, balancing each possible chance, scrutinising each possible fact, weighing each possible influence, analysing each possible combination, in order that, from out of all, it may choose such a love-gift as may win back the gift of our own love. 'There is One in the midst of you Whom you know not.' Near you, within you, the Great Spirit, Father of your spirit, lives to love you. Round about you are entwined, like mother's arms, the clasping efforts of His tenderness. Before you, in an infinite appeal, arise the infinite records of His kindness, of His gentleness, and of His pity. Beside you, with ineffable condescension, His infinite love stoops low to whisper a message so great that no angel could speak it, so sweet that no heart could dream of it, so loving that no love of a creature could love it enough. God is love. God is very near.

God is the witness of our life. 'All things are naked and open to His eyes.' He looks upon us with a knowledge that penetrates to the deepest secrets of our soul. No dawning thought escapes His glance. No evanescent impulse is hidden from His sight. He gazes ever upon us with a wisdom that searches into the lurking places of our motives, and follows to the furthermost strain of our fancy. But all this intimate knowledge of our life gives only reason for our Father's pity or for our Father's kindness. It is no knowledge of a stranger that judges weakness with contempt, wrong-doing with anger, and guilt with punishment. It is the knowledge of a Father and of a Friend, of One who both by nature and by choice is near to us in love, that He may make us like to Himself by perfect happiness and untroubled peace. So is our life lit with the sunlight of a presence that is divine. So is our love kept living by the nearness of a love that gathers in one strong fondness and in one tender grace more than a mother's sympathy, more than a father's care. Fear not, for He is near Who loves you, Who loves you always, and Who loves you most. Let the sweet whispering of this love haunt with quiet message and with blessed prompting the silent hours of your soul. Let the bright presence of this love draw nearer to you in your lonely hours, and fill your heart with bright pure consciousness of a gentle power that stoops down in answer to your humble yearnings to lift you up to all that is great and good and beautiful. In the solitude and silence, listen and speak to the Spirit of Love. He is very near within your life. Listen! He loves you. Speak! You love Him.

Still, in one human way we long for a presence that comes within our human life. We weary if we have only memory. We pine if we have only hope. Our thought may pass beyond the stars, but our heart must rest upon the earth. Our will may dwell with angels, but our affection craves for the visible presence of our friend. However sure his friendship be, however true the union that binds our hearts in one, yet there can be no human happiness in human friendship that cannot see with human eyes and speak with human lips. Without this, there is the wistful look for a far-off face, the listening for a voice that is silent, the longing for the ' touch of a vanished hand.' What the joy of presence is we can only know when absence has taught us to realise its loss, and when, again returning, presence teaches us the full reality of its own joy and the full peacefulness of its own repose. However true and faithful friends may be, they cannot, while apart, know what it is to meet again. There is the first glimpse of a beloved face, the first word of a voice that thrills through all our being, a reality more ecstatic than a vision, more wonderful than a dream. There is the happiness that overflows in wondering doubt of itself. There is the security that comes back again to tranquil depths of hearts that throb together, of ' hands that hold each other and are still.'

Poor child ! Thou art lonely in the very midst of love. The visible charms of earth, the exquisite undulations of graceful form, the symmetry of marble line with the softness of moulded curve in perfect feature, these can bewitch thy heart, while the soft melody of a voice can steal away thy senses and lull

thy soul to slumber. But these are shadowy as the unsubstantial clouds that float and vanish far beyond the hills, and these are phantoms as the faces seen in dreams to be only remembered as a fancy of the night. These may for a moment satisfy thy heart, but they cannot satisfy thy soul. Thou must long for the presence of a spirit. Thy soul is lonely still for lack of love.

But again, though thy soul may dwell with the unseen loveliness of the spirit, gazing with happy joy and peaceful ecstasy upon the immaterial charms of angels, resting with full repose of mind and will before the intellectual vision of the Eternal Presence that realises all the infinite possibilities of created beauty in a beauty that is divine, yet human eyes cannot behold this splendour nor human ears catch the infinite harmonies of God's uttered Word. Thou must long for the presence of a friend. Thus, even still, thy human heart is lonely in the very midst of love.

Child of beauty, thou must needs love beauty; child born to the image of the loveliness of God, thou must first love the beauty of the spirit. Thy spirit must first learn to live in the presence of the Spirit of Love. Then thou shalt learn to love the beauty that is thy birthright, the beauty which can fill thy soul with rapturous longings that ever rise in ceaseless energy, yet ever rest in perfect peace.

Child of beauty, thou art made to restore to Heaven the beauty of an angel united to the beauty that was lost in Paradise. But, child of beauty, thou must wait. Now, thou must love the unseen presence of God who lives within thy life, and thou must only

long for the human presence of our beloved Jesus. Child of beauty, wait! Hereafter thy soul and heart shall both be happy evermore, when thy spirit shall be lifted up to see the loveliness of God, and when thy human eyes shall rest upon the beauty of the face of Christ.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC

Music has a meaning. Music is more than the long-linked rapture of sweet sounds whose rippling mirthfulness or slow sad wail, whose soldier strain or passionate appeal, captivates the outward ear. Music is a language. For in the plashing of its pretty laughter, or in the wave of its melancholy mood, or in the flood of its tear-swollen waters, or in the crashing of its angry cataracts, or in the billows of its melodious thunder, is heard a sense concealed while yet conveyed, an impression magic-like yet plainly palpable, a meaning simple yet mysterious, real yet inexpressible, accurate yet indefinite, a meaning so masterful as to overpower the heart, fascinate the fancy, and enamour the ear, yet so delicate as to defy definition, escape the sight, and bewilder the brain. Music is a language ; not indeed that it speaks with the words which human use and human art have coined and stamped into stereotyped sense, but it speaks with the sound-waves of Nature that absorb the soul with the truth of their teaching, and awaken its sensitive strings to vibrate to the message told by Nature's own exquisite touch.

The language of Music and the language of words have the likeness of one common kinship. As in speech the meaningless letters are set into syllables,

the syllables linked into sense-bearing symbols, the symbols evolved into sentences, so in Music the meaningless notes are balanced into bars, the bars flow on into expression-fraught phrases, the phrases are completed in movements ; and, again, as the mere material sentences of letters breathe with a living idea, so the mere mechanical succession of sounds is quickened by a living message.

Yet the language of words and the language of Music are unlike in personal character. First, in a broad, plain, direct way, words are the language of thought ; Music is the language of emotion. You will fully recognise this fact if you reflect that words can have no influence over feeling except through mind. For the words of an unknown tongue can touch no chord of sympathy. It is only when understood that words have power to appeal to emotion, and soften or excite. Now the understanding of the sense which words bear is the domain of mind, for the sense which words bear is determined by thought. Thus, in the second place, the meaning of words comes, as I have said, from Art. But the meaning of Music comes from Nature. How is this ?

There is a marvellous unity in Nature ; a marvellous likeness in its laws ; and therefore a marvellous order in its action. Wherefore, when the waves of Music break through the outward ear upon the sensitive nerves of sound, these nerves, which are the living strings of a divine instrument, echo with vibrating answer in kindred chords of soul the throbbing touch and truthful tone of the power that plays upon them. Thus, then, this impulse which in its own key and cadence calls forth its sister-beats of feeling, sets also

thrilling the threads of thought, for thought and feeling, rooted in one life react responsive to each other's action, until an idea flashes into light, an intellectual image of the emotion that is burning. Hence, further, we learn why this intellectual idea, born of emotion, and only indirectly child of Music, should be vague because emotion is so vast, intangible because emotion is so delicate, irresistible because emotion is so inevitable. Hence, too, we learn why it is that while the accents of some foreign shore may fall unheeded on our ear, nor bear a meaning to our mind, the tones of Music will yet thrill with the same message upon each human soul. The melodies of Erin's grief will speak their sad story to the soldier who watches by the banks of the Rhine or to the Switzer who climbs on the cliffs of the Alps ; and the frolic of France, or the weird whim of Hungary, or the quaint mood of Norway, or the ardour of Italy, or the passion of Spain, or the sedateness of Teuton, under any sky, by any shore, will tell the same tale in their Music. For, again, the language of words is a language of the brain ; Music is a language of the heart. Now the heart needs no teaching.

Furthermore, as Music's meaning is for the ear not for the eye, and as it appeals directly not to the brain but to the heart, its message is a breathing, throbbing influence. The work of other arts is dead ; Music's work is living. Painting, sculpture, architecture, with their kindred arts of outward form, realise the ideal of the artist's mind in dumb colour, or in dead stone, and only through these lifeless images teach their lesson or manifest their emotion. Music, like its twin art of eloquence, is a palpitating expression of

actual emotion, the living utterance of a living message. Written Music is only a dead record of what the reality would be were its actual impression thrilling under the enchanter's touch, were its actual inspiration burning on the prophet's lips.

Eloquence, even when read, may yet enlighten thought or kindle feeling, because it speaks directly to the mind. Written Music has no meaning unless, in fancy at least if not in fact, its living waves awake the ear and rouse emotion; for the heart only lives with a love that is living, it dies with a love that is dead.

So far we have seen that Music has a meaning. It is a language. It is a language of emotion. It is a language that is living. Now we come to reflect upon what that meaning is. What is Music's message?

Let me put my answer in the words of a great man and great musician—Cardinal Newman, master of the violin as well as master of English style, wrote: 'Music is the expression of ideas greater and more profound than any in the visible world, ideas which centre indeed in Him Who is the source of all beauty, order, and perfection. Is it possible that the inexhaustible evolution and disposition of notes, so rich yet so simple, so intricate yet so regulated, so various yet so majestic, should be a mere sound which is gone and perishes? Can it be that those mysterious stirrings of heart, and keen emotions, and strange yearnings after we know not what, and awful impressions from we know not whence, should be wrought in us by what is unsubstantial and comes and goes and begins and ends in itself? It is not so; it cannot be. No! they have escaped from some higher sphere. They are the outpourings of eternal harmony in the medium of

created sound. They are echoes from our home. They are the voice of angels, or the Magnificat of saints.'

Hence, Music is a revelation. Sight and sound are twin sisters. Nature teaches us through both. For, as the order of the universe which we behold tells of a unity, wisdom, power, hid behind that material veil, so the harmonies which we hear, as whenever created chords answer to a divine touch, are messages that invite to grandeur of ideas, to nobility of character, to the beauty of innocence, and to the magnificence of unselfish love.

Now revelation includes an inward inspiration and its outward utterance. We will speak of both.

As to Music's inspiration, Cardinal Newman again wrote, ' Rising in his strength, the musician will break through the trammels of words ; he will scatter human voices, even the sweetest, to the winds ; he will be borne upon nothing else than the fullest flood of sounds which art has enabled him to draw from mechanical contrivances ; he will go forth as a giant as far as ever his instruments can reach, starting from their secret depths fresh and fresh elements of beauty and grandeur as he goes, and pouring them together into still more marvellous and rapturous combinations.'

So was it with all great masters in Music. Yet the same inspiration, infinite in its excellence, took its definite shape and personal character from the prophet soul through whom it spoke. Thus we admire the power of Beethoven which always elevates, his depth which never wearies ; the majesty of Mozart, the simple beauty of his melody and the richness of his chords ; the sweet song of Mendelssohn and the

magnificence of his rhythm ; the fulness and finish of Haydn ; the delicacy of Bach dominating his sonorous forcefulness ; the pathos of Gounod and the rapture of his harmony ; the prettiness of Mercadante ; the enthusiastic ardour of Rossini ; the romantic loveliness of Weber ; the lyric poetry of Schubert, the Shelley amongst musicians ; the austere mood of Schumann, always deeply German ; the luxuriant rhapsodies of the Hungarian Liszt ; the fresh, quaint lay of the Norwegian Grieg ; the brilliancy and strength of Chopin—heritage from his Polish mother ; the dramatic genius and orchestral resourcefulness of Wagner. Each of these is a typical expression in human sound of the divine message hid in Music.

The study of the personal features of the inspiration as it became characteristic in the Music of great masters brings us in face of the distinction between the message itself and the form in which that message may be set, a distinction somewhat like that which we recognise in literature between the matter and the style of a discourse. In Music there must be some definite form or style, some measure, or, as one might roughly say, some rhythm. Now if the message be coldly told in stern unsympathetic form, we have the frigid Music of the old *régime*. If the form be quite broken through in order to let fancy loose, we have the extravagant Music of modern romance. If all be fully beautified indeed, yet firmly balanced into a proportioned unity, like that which in human life makes not a cripple nor a monster but a perfect man, we have the classic Music of the great masters. In this Beethoven, during his noonday, was giant genius above them all.

By classic Music I do not mean that which merely imitates ancient models, as classic Architecture is said to be Greek or Roman. Classic, I understand, in its fullest and truest sense, to be what is thoroughly proportioned in all its parts, absolutely accurate in the balance of true taste, faultlessly exquisite in its symmetry. In classic art each element must be choice, but each must be subservient to the unity of all. There must be no exaggeration of idea, no grotesqueness of fancy, no eccentricity of taste, no over-reaching of power, no affectation of expression. All must be measured, moderated, moulded into a harmony that is refined and finished, into the perfect symmetry of perfect art. This law, which is of absolute evidence, inexorably condemns much modern literature and much modern Music. Bad Music reaches one extreme in the buffoonery of low music-halls. It reaches the opposite extreme in the monomania for mechanical balance. The fault of the first is that it degrades Music to what is foul, the expression of mere sensuousness. The fault of the second is that it paralyses Music into what is false, the affectation of mere counterpoint.

This brings us to a further reflection. There has been a most admirable advance during our modern age in instrumental perfectness. Now every art grows greater with the greater power and delicacy of its instruments. In old days the musician had only rough, coarse means wherewith to utter in sound the ideal song that thrilled within his soul. Nowadays the marvellous perfectness of organ, piano, string, wood, and even brass, bears with it to the musician a twofold boon.

On the one hand, it stimulates his talent, crystallises

his ideas, and suggests a wealth and a variety of Music language impossible before; on the other hand, it enables him to express in clear and abundant tones the impressions which otherwise had remained only vague, dim dreams of vanishing rapture. For, remember that not only does the rapidity, volume, force, or sweetness of the instruments at his command extend the musician's empire to new vast regions, but each difference of timbre is a difference in kind. How different the same melody when rendered by piano or by string! No wood, however strong, can give the effect of brass. No brass, however soft, can take the place of wood. This power of orchestration, as it is called, the power of calling on each element of the orchestra to do its own characteristic work in its own characteristic way, is most manifest in Gounod and in Wagner.

With lesser men this power brings its peril. There is danger lest the musician should so revel in the consciousness of his own power as to forget the meaning of his inspiration, the emotion of his message, the measure of his rhythm, and all true laws of art, in order to grasp, with fond but unpardonable conceit, the shameful success of mere effect.

What I am trying to express may be made more clear by reference to a distinction which, as far as I know, is original and which I venture to offer with great diffidence, the distinction between poetry and prose in Music. That there is a difference in Music analogous to that which exists between poetry and prose in literature, seems evident. For instance, the Gregorian chant is unmistakable prose. It may be magnificent. Mozart, on hearing a verse of the

Gregorian 'Stabat' exclaimed, 'Only five notes, yet what power!' Again Mozart said that he would give all the Music he ever wrote to have been the composer of the Gregorian 'Pater Noster.' It may be perfect prose, but it is not poetry. Palestrina also wrote prose music. It is beautiful in its own way.

Most of my hearers are well aware that there is in the Catholic Church an actual question hotly debated as to the style of Music suited for religious worship. It is a question which from an artistic point of view deeply interests the whole musical world. A right and most admirable reaction is taking place against the use in Church service of such Music as is wanting not only in artistic refinement but even also in devout reverence. Yet here, as in all great human movements, there is an extreme party, small it may be, but narrow and aggressive. They recognise no medium between the poetry of the opera and the prose of plain chant. They would exile from religion all Music that is not in strict Gregorian style. Against them one might oppose the opinion and the argument of Cardinal Newman, a man who with marvellous intellectual and moral gifts had also the taste as well as the power, the broadness as well as the truth, of a great artist-soul. He wrote: 'What are the ordinances and practices of the Church but regulated expressions of keen or deep or turgid feeling, and thus a cleansing, as Aristotle would word it, of the sick soul? She is the poet of her children—full of Music to soothe the sad and control the wayward—wonderful in story for the imagination of the romantic, rich in symbol and imagery, so that gentle and delicate feelings which will not bear words may in silence intimate their presence

or commune with themselves. Her very being is poetry; every psalm, every petition, every collect, every versicle, the Cross, the mitre, the thurible, is the fulfilment of some dream of childhood or aspiration of youth. Such poets as are born under her shadow she takes into her service; she sets them to write hymns, or to compose chants, or to embellish shrines, or to determine ceremonies, or to marshal processions; nay, she can even make schoolmen of them, as she made of St. Thomas, till logic becomes poetical.' Now is a Church who loves the beautiful and who employs in her service every other art; who builds her temples not only on the lines of Greece or Rome, but also in the phantasy of Gothic ideals; who gathers on her altar flowers made by human fingers, as well as the flowers of the garden or of the field; who embellishes her walls with pictures, transfigures her windows into regulated rainbows, and in her aisles groups statues of every style; who clothes her priest with cloth of gold or with lace of fairy texture; who fashions her sacred vessels of purest metal set with every varied hue and sheen of precious stone: is she to allow no Music but such as is cold and colourless, feelingless and unsympathetic? Is she to tolerate no melody other than 'speech-song,' no harmony other than the crude inventions of a bygone age? Nay, rather while reserving speech-song for her rubrics, will she not admit all great masters of Music to worship at her shrine? Will she not, furthermore, grant to her children of every different character and climate to utter in their own personal way the fulness of feeling and the variety of fancy which is their own personal understanding and emotion of the one great beautiful

message which she bears to all? Surely one cannot expect that the warm Celtic heart or the vivid Italian fancy should allow their prayerful song to be frozen into the harder lines and colder taste of Saxon or of Teuton. The Catholic Church does not like Jansenists in doctrine or in ritual, in ethics or in art. She ought not to be set down as the patroness of Jansenists in Music.

This will appear more plain when I give the reasons for my distinction between poetry and prose in Music.

A characteristic of poetry is its metre. It need not have rhyme but it must have rhythm. But poetry does not mean mere prose cut into certain lengths. Wherefore, above and beyond metre, poetry must have in the second place noble and beautiful ideas coloured by fancy and kindled by feeling. Poetry, in the third place, has its own language—rich, vivid, strong, beautiful.

Wherefore, if Music obey no metrical measure, or if its message be commonplace, trivial, or insipid, or if its expression be dull, colourless, passionless, it is not poetry. On the other hand, even though the metre be neglected, even though the meaning or the motive be only saved from insignificance by its surroundings, the language may yet be exquisitely poetic, and thus we may have Music that is not poetry and yet is beautiful prose. This is found frequently in Wagner, of whom also that is sometimes true which he himself dared to say of Mendelssohn: 'He wrote beautiful commonplace.'

Poetry in Music to be true must include true melody. Melody has been described, by whom I do not now remember, as 'A succession of tones in the

same key, or in a special sense it is artistically constructed song. Every melody, even the simplest, must possess a certain connection between its single tones; this connection shows itself in, first, the proportion of the tones with regard to interval; second, their relation to the key and harmony; third, their vocal or singing quality. The relation of the melody to the key and harmony ought to be always natural. The melody ought to move within the scale and ought not to apply to notes foreign to the scale.' But to this theoretic definition we must add a practical proviso. The bald definition would admit as melody any succession of notes fulfilling the above conditions, however vulgar, jingling, or senseless such succession be. Melody it certainly is not to the ordinary ear. Much less is it melody to the cultured musician enamoured of true art. True art only recognises as its own what both in idea and in expression is beautiful. Hence melody above and beyond its mere technical conditions must realise some fair form of beauty in the succession of its sweet sounds.

A danger even to the master-musician is that he may lose all thread of melody in the tangled mazes of his harmony, forget the meaning of his message in the ostentation of his power, follow with the endless analysis of a metaphysician all the possible phases of the inspiration which he should utter as a prophet, and with proud self-consciousness endeavour to impress by elocution a lesson not worth the hearing; or with rebellious insolence attempt by mere trick of art or sleight of skill to satisfy hearts that yearn to hear in Music, with the sweetness of its voice, with the sacredness of its revelation, a comfort, a help, a

sympathy, a hope, a strength, a love, echoed from the harmonies of our eternal home.

Nay, rather as poetry is the strongest and most vivid form in which deep emotion can be by words expressed, so Music, which is above all a language of emotion, soars to its highest and most congenial sphere when its pathos or its power pours forth sweet sounds in vibrating ecstasy of meaning, uttering the inspiration of a prophet with the enthusiasm of a poet in such inebriating measure of clear melody as is supported, not overwhelmed, by the waves of harmony that throb around it, until the ear be charmed not startled, the soul subdued not bewildered, and from the heart re-echo its own answer to its own language in a nobler impulse, a gentler sympathy, and a holier love.

Hitherto we have dwelt upon the meaning of Music as it implies an inward inspiration. We will now speak about its outward utterance.

Were the composer to speak his own actual message through the strings or keys that thrill or throb under his own actual touch, his meaning would be complete. For then the expression would be the living counterpart of the sense. But when you take the composer's place, when you represent his character and speak his part, you should become a living instrument with thought responsive to the master's touch and with full feeling breathing his emotion. Wherefore, the rendering of Music must be, in the first place, intelligent.

If you do no more than play the piece with absolute accuracy of time and with absolute truth of tone, obeying with soulless precision the indications printed

on the paper, you are no better than a barrel-organ. Technique, as it is called, the mechanical perfectness of the playing, is indeed essential. But technique is mere declamation. Expression is elocution, and if intelligent it is oratory. Many performers of great renown are yet only machines, not musicians. The true musician, with indefinite and intangible subtlety, will recognise the Music's meaning, and with such obedience to time yet mastery over measure, with such true yet independent intonation, with such accurate yet characteristic accent, with such delicacy yet with such force, he will sound the notes as to make the melody a living song and the harmonies a living chorus. The true musician will understand the reason of the notes and of their numbers; his playing will be intelligent. Yet, again, because intelligent it will be personal. As both Irving and Benson nobly render Shakespeare, yet with a difference due to their intelligent difference of character, so de Packmann, a Frenchman, and Paderewski, a Pole, vary in their rendering of Chopin.

In the second place, the player must be in sympathy with the composer. Sympathy supposes intelligence but to it adds the appreciation and fellow-feeling of an artist for an artist's work. That the rendering of Music is not a bare chill sequence of logic is amply evident. The language of emotion cannot be fitly uttered unless the emotion which inspired it be shared by the living instrument whose sympathy thrills from his very soul to lip or finger.

The absence of sympathy may result in caricature. There is nothing great or beautiful in human life which is not liable to be insulted by the mimicry of mean

minds. This kind of insult is, alas! too common in our age. Good Music may be grotesquely misrepresented. Of some musicians this is particularly true. Thus, for instance, there are bits of Mozart or of Rossini or of Lambielotte which when played with sympathy are magnificent, and which yet may be made to appear ridiculous by the traitor-touch of contemptible and outrageous caricature.

To intelligence and sympathy, which are qualities of mind and heart, the living instrument must, in the third place, add refinement, which is a quality of taste. Refinement may be best explained by its extreme opposite — vulgarity. To make the Music subservient to the performer's vanity, or to turn it into a platform for the exhibition of gymnastics, is a proof of the brutal irreverence of a coarse character. To rasp the fiddle with the rapidity and riot of a motor-car, to shriek a song with the lungs of a steam-whistle, or to thump the piano with the muscle of a prize-fighter, shows skill—yes, the skill of an acrobat or of a clown. Such people may be marvellous performers, but they are not musicians. They are vulgar men or vulgar women.

Hence it is unfair to contrast a cold, colourless style of Church Music with a rich, warm style when the former is rendered by trained and devout singers, while the latter is shrieked or shouted by irreligious professionals or by uneducated amateurs. Gregorian badly sung is unspeakably abominable. When rightly rendered it is majestic and most prayerful, as is also, when rightly rendered, Beethoven, Mozart, or Rossini.

Intelligence is a quality of the head; sympathy

a quality of the heart ; refinement a quality of taste. We now come to the last and crowning quality essential to the true musician, a quality of character. It is the test of great Music as this is above good Music. It is the test of genius as this is above talent. It is masterful emotion that is yet masterfully controlled. It includes twin elements ; first, emotion, then control. Great feeling is eloquent in great Music. The strange fascination and splendid forcefulness of some Music comes always and comes only from deep and strong emotion. It is only when an intense thrill or enthusiastic throb rocks the musician's inmost soul that the waves of his melody arise in their majesty and fling their ocean-like harmonies upon the awe-struck ear. But unless this power is to be no more than a tumult of passion in a human sea, it must be under the mastery of mind. Emotion must be measured by control. Power without control is only passion. Those of you will understand what I mean who have felt their most delicate impulses unwillingly bewildered, almost bewitched, by the delicious although delirious outburst of passionate affection in the love-songs of doubtful opera. Yet, did you not think, even while the loosened strains of tempestuous fondness surged over your soul, that there is a charm more exquisite in the dignity of self-possessed emotion than in the abandonment of hot, panting sentiment ; that the effrontery of sensuousness repels while the reserve of innocence attracts ; and that there is no love so lovable as the love that is pure ? The beauty of Music, like the beauty of maiden, loses none of its power, but gains in winsomeness when modest. Noble art is the work of noble men, and the man who is truly

noble is the man who to great power adds greater self-control.

When we speak of an orchestra we find ourselves again confronted by the contrast between the mechanic and the musician. Unity there must be or we should have chaos. One thought must guide ; one impulse rule. But if there be only unity there will be nothing more than mechanism. If all the indefinite possibilities of various view, all the fathomless depths of personal appreciation, all the wealth of individual sympathies, are to be not only unified but identified, not only harmonised but brought heart to heart, there must be the glowing inspiration of a master-mind and the burning emotion of a master-soul. The strings are silent, however fit for eloquent sound, until awakened by an ecstatic touch. So too the orchestra, however pregnant with mysterious power, is lifeless until quickened by a prophet's breath. Concerted Music is not the bare, bald figure of the foreground ; but all the subtle sympathies of light and shade, all the countless harmonies of the background, its almost hidden hues, its unobtrusive graces, give to the picture the symmetry and completeness of a masterpiece. It is the director who catches the sheen that plays upon what seems to be insignificant, who calls forth from faint horizons those almost imperceptible tones that ripple upon the full wave of the melody, and who, with liquid ease but ocean grasp, pours the harmonies together until their sympathetic mood and love-linked measure beat with the same tidal throb of soul.

One last short word about the meaning of Music in a moral sense. It is a human help with power to

comfort. It even 'hath charms to soothe the savage breast.' It is a human help to safeguard the soul, for it fills the fancy with fair, bright forms; it attunes the ear to sounds that are sweet, and the heart to impulses that are innocent. It is a human help to elevate character, for it lifts the listener to an ideal world, where he forgets all that is base or brutal in the serene atmosphere of refined art and pure delight.

Music is more than a human help. It is a divine call. First to holy peace. You remember the sacred words: 'Whensoever the evil spirit was upon Saul, David took his harp, and played with his hand, and Saul was refreshed, and was better, for the evil spirit departed from him.' Music is a call to Paradise. It is the only human art attributed to the angels. We do not think of them as artists of dead form on coloured canvas or sculptured stone. But we do think of them as artists in living expression. Therefore when the splendour of the truth they utter flows in ecstatic strain, and when the harmonious raptures of their soul-strings throb with the same seraphic love, we say that the angels sing.

Listen! Like sweet wood whose fluted tones softly flood their full, fond memories in meditative mood; like the brass whose resonant accents chide the sad with clanging shout, or call the soldier to the clash of war; like the exquisite voice of the string that pleads in plaintive wail of emotion, or weeps with tear of infinite tenderness, or sobs with the sound of a desolate sea, or breathes forth a strange strong inspiration of thoughtfulness; like the rippling rapture of pathetic appeal of piano; like the organ's sonorous thunder, or absorbing speech, or quiet majesty, or

bewildering wealth of torrent-tide eloquence ; listen ! with melodies that answer every aspiration of your soul, with harmonies that enrapture every chord of your heart ; listen ! Music, the cry of our exile on earth. Music, the song of the angels in heaven. Listen ! Music calls to Paradise.

THE STRANGENESS OF THE SUPERNATURAL

Let me offer for your consideration some thoughts about the Strangeness of the Supernatural.

We must first come to an understanding as to the meaning of our terms. Nature, in its narrowest sense, means the particular sort of a thing, the inmost kind, which explains definitely and finally what that thing is, and why and how it acts. Whatever then is suited to the nature of a thing, or the fitting outcome of its energy, whatever is in harmony with its kind, or congenial to its sort, is natural to it.

But we are entering upon a question of a wider sphere, and we will take the word nature in a wider sense. Nature, in its broader meaning, is not the kind of one individual but the character of the world, not the sort encircled within one subject but the sort wide-spreading as is creation. Nature, then, means the whole system of the universe ; and natural means the spontaneous result of its forces or the suitable combination of its facts.

Now the supernatural means what is outside nature. It is not opposed to nature, not contrary to it. It is not antagonistic to its existence, nor in conflict with its force. Hence what is supernatural is not unnatural. Nay, the supernatural, without any

relation of necessary kinship, has a possible relation of kinship with nature. For the two orders, the natural and the supernatural, come from the one God, whose image they in different ways reflect. Between them, therefore, there can be no quarrel. But the supernatural is simply and absolutely outside nature. It is above all natural force and beyond all natural fitness. It is not from within the world, but from without. Set this thought in another shape.

We have some idea, however indistinct, of what kind of things make up the realm of nature, and we know that within this realm, whatever is the result of inherent activity or the consequence of inborn power is itself natural. Hence, although the matter of our thought is very vast and the method of our thinking very vague, we can yet grasp this much with accurate hold, that whatever is within the potency of created things to be, to do, to make, to mould, is therefore within the order of nature and therefore natural.

Further, think of nature not merely as it is but as it might be. Fancy all its potency fulfilled. Make manifold its multitudes until your brain grows dizzy with calculations of numberless natures through endless æons in boundless space. Intensify its forces. Heighten its qualities. Let your imagination flash along the scale of its possible perfections. Let your intellect pour over the sequence of its possible attributes. Yet, however far you go, however high you soar, however deep you dig, you still stand within nature's wide domain. Nay do not stop short at extent in quantity or intensity of quality. Go to the very root of both. Take the very substance of things, their very essence, as the schoolmen say. Change it

too. Multiply it. Perfect it. Vary it. While you remain within the same order of creation you have got nothing more than what is natural.

Now travel in thought to the furthermost frontier of nature's kingdom. Stand upon the very brink of all reality that is or might be. All seems dark beyond, silent, hollow, not chaos, but mere blank void and emptiness. Outside the universe what can there be but nothingness ? Yes, that is it. Outside nature there is nothing natural. But outside the order of creation there is the order of the Creator, the order of God, therefore the order of Grace. Outside the natural there is the supernatural.

This gives us one explanation of the Strangeness of the Supernatural. As it is outside nature, so is it unknowable to reason. The supernatural is strange because to it science is and must be blind.

It is said that amidst the deepest silence there are yet sounds loud as the din of thunder or the crash of a cataract to finer hearing, although imperceptible to our coarser ear. It is said that in the very darkness of the night, while to us there appears to be not even a faint far glimmer, to keener eyes there is a glare like sunshine. Now it is not in this way merely that science is blind to the supernatural. It is not a question of degree, it is not a question of vividness of light, nor of subtlety of ken. As the ear must fail to catch with answering echo the tenderest tint or brightest beauty of a colour, as the eye is always powerless to paint upon its living canvas a sound, however sweet this be in gentle melody or however majestic in harmonious resonance, so is the supernatural unknowable to reason, so is it strange to science.

Thus man may walk in a world of wonder, he may live in the very midst of mystery, yet to him all may seem dark and silent as a death-sleep, except when mere natural forces agitate the undulous ether or strike vibrations through the circumambient air. He may stoop to scan the littleness of the atoms, or he may rise up to contemplate the vastness of the stars. He may analyse the elements of matter, or he may knit into synthetic system the workings of his own spiritual powers. Nay more, man must know not merely of the existence, but something even of the nature, of God. For the great Creator's name is written on creation. For the earth proclaims His power and the heavens speak His splendours, nor can His message fail from the memory of men since 'the floods have lifted up their voice, with the noise of many waters. Wonderful are the surges of the sea. Wonderful is the Lord upon the deep.'

But to know God only as He is mirrored in His works is only to know Him through earthen images, through vague adumbrations, and through abstract analogies, which, while they teach us something about God's power as shown in His outward action, teach us much more this other lesson—how far, how infinitely far, God's own inner life must be beyond and outside all natural knowledge. For God has an inner life, a life which is absolute and infinite, a life which is eternal, immense, immutable, a life which is alone in its own order of being, which is essentially beyond and above and outside the order of creation, a life which therefore transcends all natural perfection and is incomprehensible to all natural knowledge.

Thus God as He is in Himself belongs to the super-

natural order. He is not Himself within the order of nature. Yet nature is His work, and therefore it makes manifest something of His attributes. In this sense God, as the Maker, Moulder, and Master of nature, is knowable to natural man. But this is not to know God as He is in Himself, but as He is in His creatures; not as He is in His supernatural working, but as He is in His natural works. That knowledge of God which is possible to reason is indeed a natural knowledge, and in a sense we may say that what is known by such knowledge is natural, inasmuch as the Author of nature is an object of natural thought. But we are not now speaking either of such knowledge or of what is known by it. We are speaking now of what is outside nature, whether it be in existence or in energy. But God's own life is outside nature, and His working in nature may be above and beyond what is akin to created kind or possible to created power, for He is not bound down within the limits of the world which He has made. We are speaking of the supernatural, and this, from the very nature of things, and from the very meaning of the word, is unknowable to reason.

Some scientists indeed seek to show by natural reason that God does not exist, or that He is not such as Theists hold Him to be. In this they are not speaking as masters in their own matters, but as meddlers with metaphysics. They are absolutely impotent to convince the human race, and they are readily refuted by human reason. But, in any case, they are quite outside our present question. Reason cannot reach beyond natural knowledge of natural things. We are speaking of the supernatural.

Let me pause one moment here in order to point

out a practical conclusion. Science is blind to the supernatural. Scientists, then, who speak about it are not to be listened to.

When clever men become intoxicated with the fumes of scientific fame, as they not unfrequently do, they refuse to keep to their own safe path, but stagger into unknown ways where they tumble about most deplorably. Yet, because they are thought to be clever, the stupid mob sets down their gyrations not as a drunken reel but as an exhibition of gymnastic power. Each stimulant, when taken to excess, produces its own peculiar phase of tipsiness. An overdose of science makes a weak head dogmatic and dictatorial. The inebriated gentleman will declaim, with rhapsodic but rather suspicious humility, against anyone being certain of anything, yet he will get very angry and very objectionable if you doubt his infallibility about the supernatural. His chief characteristic when in this state is assumption. He can decide every question by assuming that he is right. The crowd, either through ignorance or through interest, applauds assumptions when they are endorsed with a fashionable name. Look at this contrast. Were there question of the new metal said to have been discovered in the air, and were I to maintain that it combines with hydrogen to form wholesome water, and with carbon to form unwholesome gas, you would undoubtedly set me down as a trifler or as a dunce. You would tell me, probably with some indignation, that it is absurd to solve the question of the new metal by supposing it to be oxygen. Yet on the other hand, a distinct begging of the question through ignoring its meaning is condoned in those scientists who attempt

to prove that there can be nothing supernatural, because they suppose that all things are natural which can exist. Is it too tiresome to repeat the old-fashioned but wise words, 'Let the cobbler stick to his last'? What jurisdiction can science have outside the facts of nature and the principles of reason? None. What measure can science have wherewith to gauge God's mysteries or control His powers? None. What knowledge can science have of the supernatural? None. Understand, then, with what jealous distrust you must watch the assumptions of men who, because they know something about the earth, claim to legislate for Heaven, who dare to limit the infinite expanse of truth by the horizon of their own ignorance. You have good cause to be on your guard. The cleverness of professional agnostics is sometimes best shown by the skill with which they cloak their blunders. Their poison is frequently refined and delicately sprinkled over learned and interesting works. Their fallacies, like microbes of disease, float nowadays throughout the intellectual atmosphere. Now, if by rash reading of irreligious books you breathe a poisonous air your tone of thought cannot continue healthy. A sturdy constitution may for a time kill the microbes, but in the end the microbes will kill the man. When you must work amidst fever you take prudent precautions. When in your scientific studies you are forced to come in contact with mental or moral contagion see that you have some spiritual antidote. But when you are free to avoid what is false or foul, do not madly imperil the strength and beauty of your soul. 'They that love the danger shall perish in it.' Plainly learn from science that only which science is duly qualified

to teach. But should you want to know anything about what is outside nature, do not look for it to science. For science is only science within its own sphere. It becomes blind with a blindness that is contagious when it seeks to solve the Strangeness of the Supernatural.

In another way the supernatural is strange. Naturally it is strange because it is invisible to reason. It is also strange because it is audible to faith. From beyond the brink of all creation a voice can come. From outside the world a message may be heard that is not of the world. Reason cannot see what is above the teaching of nature.

Now in order that a word from beyond the world should fix its meaning within the natural mind, two conditions must be fulfilled: reason's readiness to hear and faith's warrant to be heard. As to the first, while a man cannot escape from the sights or sounds of nature because they confront his thought with their own evidence, he can yet turn away all earnest attention from a truth that is told, because it is not now the truth itself which enforces his conviction, but the telling of it which appeals for his assent. Thus he is easily able to refuse to hearken with meditative mind to a message from another world.

Again, even though a man should listen, nay, even though it should be proved to him that what is told is credible, he may stop short there. He may indeed be forced to admit that the thing is credible. He can still refuse to say that the thing is true. While he admits that there are good grounds for believing it, he need go no further. He may still decline to advance beyond the mere reasonableness of belief, as far

as an actual and positive adhesion directly to the truth itself. For by evidence he must see it to be logically credible; by faith he may accept it as really true.

Is it not strange that reason is not always ready to welcome truth? Speaking to our own point, there is a twofold explanation of the fact that some men shun the very slightest appearance of the supernatural. In the first place, many a man's reason is deaf to revelation only because his will is bad. It is better to put this bluntly. If a man listens to revelation he must give up vice, or it will be brought home to him, with very unwelcome plainness, that he is silly as well as sinful. Now bad men will not give up vice, nor will they welcome the consciousness of being fools. Therefore they will not listen.

In the second place, reason sometimes fails to hear revelation, because whether there be any moral fault or not there is decidedly a mental flaw. Tyndal unwittingly suggested this when he wrote: 'Science tends to destroy religion, not by argument but by rendering the soil unfit for it.' Tyndal, of course, only intended to assume, with the usual arrogance of the agnostic, that all religion is either the silly superstition of the crowd or the crafty shibboleth of the priest. This is evidently a barefaced begging of the question by the coining of a counterfeit meaning, and by the misrepresentation of what the word religion stands for in the minds of most men. But in another way his statement has more truth in it than probably Tyndal ever knew. Science, if taken in Tyndal's sense—that is to say, in a positivist or materialistic sense—does render the mind unfit for religion. Science

that is exclusive shuts out the supernatural. Do not misunderstand this.

If a man be totally taken up with the practical details of business, or with the exciting game of politics, he will become less and less suited to mere abstract studies and less likely to relish the sweets of lonely contemplation. If, on the other hand, he live in a secluded sanctuary of mathematical or metaphysical meditation, as his mind grows deeper and higher so will it grow more concentrated and more intense; so too will it become less prompt to pass from point to point, less ready to realise the value of trifles, less able to take a simple or broadly accurate view, less open to appreciation as distinct from proof, and therefore less successful in matters of fact than a mind of less serious talent or less subtle thought.

Now religion does not by such one-sided sort of training unfit man's mind for science. Setting aside the very few people of irregular morals or eccentric thought who are atheists, and speaking of religion as apart from its accidental exaggerations, religion has always been understood by all men to be a belief that springs from what is most solid in conviction, that stretches to what is most sublime in aspiration, and that shelters what is most sacred in conduct. It reaches from earth to heaven, and then bends back from heaven to earth. It embraces all that is most lofty in thought and all that is most lowly in practice; all that is most keen in subtlety and all that is most simple in action; all that in life is most solemn, most mysterious, most divine, and all that is most playful, most commonplace, most human. It were more than childish, it were stupid, to say that such a study or

such a pursuit could dull or indispose the mind towards any truth.

But with science it is often otherwise. Mark, that I take science in Tyndal's sense, as the exclusive study of physical and sensible phenomena. When such study absorbs a man's mind it cramps his thought within the circle of mere material research, it constrains him logically to judge of honour according to its profit and of virtue according to its pleasure. For him the ideal of life is in its use, not in its worth. He looks upon the holiest love of a noble woman as nothing more than a mere symptom of sexual selection, and in the child of her heart he sees only the improved progeny of the ape. Of such a study it is not unfair to say that it teaches a man to gauge his principles by the barometer, to bottle his aspirations into a retort, and to weigh his motives as he weighs his money, by the market price of gold. In plain words, a man who understands nothing except by weight or measure, by formulas or coefficients, by the spectrum, the microscope, or the test-tube, by experimental analysis or by a synthesis of brain pictures, is a man whose mind is maimed. What wonder were such a man to become like hard, dry, sour soil, unfit for the seed of religion—what wonder if to him the supernatural should seem very strange !

Wherefore it is no wonder if science when it plunges with blasphemous audacity into the mysterious abyss outside the world should be hurled back blinded and paralysed, muttering some such senseless and soulless words as those of Huxley: 'The universe is a realm of realities based upon eternal silence and impenetrable gloom.' Yes, it is just that, eternal silence and im-

penetrable gloom. Not indeed that such can be a basis for a realm of realities ; but such, in bitter truth, is the fate of reason when it dares to dictate to the unknowable and refuses to hearken to the voice of God.

How far individual atheists are guilty we must leave to be decided in the secret judgment of God. Still we must not shirk the truth because it condemns or even angers error. Speaking then in general, we must absolutely accept Christ's statement : ' The spirit of truth will convince the world of sin, because they have not believed.' Yes. Mark the word well—of ' SIN.' They have not known, Christ tells us, because they have not believed ; and their unbelief is sinful because they would not listen.

Furthermore, not only is the supernatural strange, as we have seen, in that it is invisible to science, and therefore unknowable to reason, but the supernatural is also strange in that it is only audible to faith through means which are strange to the natural man. For on the one hand faith must be, in the words of St. Paul, ' a reasonable submission,' and yet on the other hand no fact, no principle that is within the order of nature can guarantee a teaching that belongs to an order of things outside nature. Hence the supernatural must show its credentials. Revelation must bring its mandate. This no human proof can do. Faith's warrant must be divine.

Now, that God can make manifest His mind to man needs no proof, for whithersoever His hand can reach thither can His voice follow. He who called things forth from nothingness can surely mould them till they bear the impress of His meaning. He who

created our spiritual soul unto the likeness of His own life, giving it power to see His truth and speak its thought, can surely stir within its consciousness a knowledge greater than its own. God's power is not subject to the laws which He has made. He can what creatures cannot. Thus He can work wonders as a token of His Will, and upon His teaching He can set the seal of some supernatural sign. There are two broad kinds of marvels that are the strange yet unmistakable proof of God's power and of God's approbation ; the wonders in work which are miracles of the divine doing through man of what is impossible to man, and the wonders in word which are prophecies or the divine foretelling through man of what is unknowable to man. Truly miracles and prophecies, being evidences shown within the world, yet sent from outside the world, are a plain yet astounding proof of what is beyond and above nature. They are a direct and undeniable although dazzling argument for what belongs to another world. They are a strange yet simple sign of the supernatural. They are a divine seal set upon the mission and the message of God's ambassador.

It is not my present purpose to prove the divine truth of the Christian revelation, but rather to show how it is and must be strange, both to reason because it is unknowable to the natural mind, and strange even to faith because its warrant for belief must be marvels that are impossible to natural power. Were we to undertake such proof it would be enough to meditate on Christ's own strange prophecy that His Church would triumph over the world, and upon the miraculous fulfilment of the Word. Never did man say

a more unlikely thing than did Jesus the Nazarene when He foretold how the dozen of poor, unlettered, incapable, and timid men around Him would change the face of the earth and bring about a state of things then impossible, now a fact. Nor was ever miracle so stupendous or so sure as is the spreading and the growth through every age and nation of the Catholic Church. It is like a day-dream. A Church that has been assailed by every sort of enemy from without, and sapped by every sort of evil from within; a Church teaching a doctrine unknowable naturally to reason and imposing a law impossible naturally to will; a Church made up of worthless human members, working without any human means, yet in the midst of human passion, pride, foolishness, and foulness realising a divine purity, and in the teeth of adverse science, statesmanship, and steel achieving a divine success. It is strange, very strange.

God's Word is no word uttered once and then silent. It is a strange, strange Word that reverberates throughout history, that throbs with ever-freshening force in the ebb and flow of ages, that spreads forth in a flood of meaning, that rises up in a torrent of truth a message that shall break 'like the sound of the sea upon men's hearts for ever.' Nor is God's work dead but living. The Church He built is not a stately pile, massive, beautiful, majestic, yet cold as clay and motionless as marble. His Church is a living being that breathes with throbbing breast, that feels with palpitating nerve, that acts with sturdy sinew, a life divinely given, indeed, and divinely guaranteed, yet having withal the thoughts that thrill through human brains and the blood that beats in human hearts. It is

strange. But, after all, it is still more strange that some men should not see it, or that when they see it they should be startled as though they had seen a spectre.

On the lake of Genesareth, one clear but stormy night of spring, the Apostles of Christ, in a small battered boat 'laboured vainly at their oars.' At six o'clock the evening before, the Master had constrained them to embark while He remained behind in order to seek the silent solitude of the mountain and pass the night in prayer, alone. Now it is the fourth watch of the night, three o'clock in the morning, and as yet they are only half-way across the lake. They have still three miles more to make in order to reach the further side. They are wearied out with their desperate struggle against wind and wave. In their danger their hearts were also tossed with tempest of doubt and disappointment. Christ's action that day seemed to them so strange. The supreme crisis had come in Jewish history. The very moment had come which had been marked out by the prophets. Yea, and the Baptist had proclaimed Christ to be the expected of ages, the Messiah who stood in their midst. The people were delirious with excitement and suspense. They were horrified and outraged with the Baptist's murder at the hands of Herod. The Pasch had brought them together in multitudes. It was the hour for the God of Israel to show His strength. It was the hour for Israel to strike. Why wait? Here is the Christ. Let Him be king. But strange, strange failure as it seemed to them of enterprise, at the very instant of success the Christ shrank back. He would not let them make Him king. They could not understand it. They were bewildered, disappointed, dis-

heartened. Now He is away, and they are in the storm.

The storms of southern skies riot with a violence unknown to our temperate north, and when they burst over landlocked lakes they burst with the suddenness as well as with the savageness of the cyclone. It is the time of the full paschal moon, but from the clear sky the loosened winds fall in a rage and disorder of frenzy and smite on the sea till it writhes in paroxysms of surging surf and seething spray. Not with the rounded billows of the ocean, but the waters, in short tangled ridges or broken heaps, rush on the boat with sudden buffet or almost upset it with sudden recoil. Down crash the winds with fiercer shriek and with deadlier stroke. Up crash the seas with more convulsive throes, with more passionate tumult. Barely can the Apostles keep the boat's head to the wind. But this cannot last longer. They are numb with exhaustion, and the tempest exults in its triumph. 'Tis the moment of wreck.

But suddenly, 'midst the storm, in the night, on the sea, their eyes are fascinated by a sight more startling than the actual danger of their death. Only a distant speck, yet it overwhelms their natural fears with supernatural awe. Intently, fixedly, fearfully they gaze, staring spellbound. Nearer and nearer it comes. Over the seething waters, through the tangled spray a figure of a man—tall, white, spectral—moves swiftly, but with a strange, easy motion, as though His steps were on the heather of the mountain, not on the hollows of the sea. In the white track of the moonlight the white figure glides forward. Around the head the long hair is streaming in the gale, lit with

a halo of ghost-like sheen. Nearer still it comes. The tall presence is close upon them. The pale face is turned towards them. The mysterious gaze is fixed on them. Yea! Yea! it is walking on the waters. It is upon them. In terror, not of the storm now but of the sight of the supernatural, they shout: 'It is an apparition!'

Then a voice, clear yet soft through the din of the tempest, resonant yet sweet 'midst the rage of the sea, a voice of supernatural power yet of human tenderness—the voice of Christ—brought them the pledge of His protection and the promise of His peace saying: 'Be of good heart. It is I. Be not afraid!'

We, too, sometimes have rough weather in our lives. Sometimes our best plans seem to be persistently thwarted, our most reasonable hopes ruthlessly denied. We are sometimes quite unable to understand Providence, and then a very tempest of treacherous seas from below and of tumultuous skies from above seems, with surf of temptation and scourge of adversity, to overwhelm our dismayed and distracted souls. Even when a divine help comes from heaven we distrust it, we are afraid of it. It is ghost-like. It is like an apparition from another world. So indeed it is, for the supernatural is strange not only to science but even at first to faith. Yet they who listen shall hear, and they who hear shall believe, and they who believe shall know, and they who know shall recognise the Word that is in the world, yet not of the world, the Word which in our hour of need, in the wildest storm of trial, in the most weird night of doubt, says with power and with sweetness within our soul: 'Be of good heart! It is I.'

'LORD THAT I MAY SEE'

Lord that I may see.—Luke xviii. 41

THOSE only who are blind really know what blindness means. Others can in fancy mourn beneath the shadow of a cloud which hides the world from them, but they cannot know the terrible truth of a night which shrouds a life in never ending darkness. Even should there be twilight, it only shows sad, weary mists and impenetrable gloom. It never unveils the beauty of the earth or the glory of the heavens. For the blind there is no blush upon the rose, no purity in the lily. There is no gracefulness in the fern, no majesty in the oak, no waving light upon the meadow, no tender purple on the mountain. The clouds have lost their scarlet and their gold. The waters of the stream and of the sea have lost their clearness and their radiance. All that was bright, joyous, and lovely, or great, noble, and sublime, has faded away from the landscape, leaving only hueless, meaningless, loveless forms. The glorious, exulting, laughing, life-giving sunshine has passed away for ever. There is nothing now but blinding white, or vacant black, or dismal shadowy grey. Even the sunlight of a smile cannot pierce that darkness, nor can a beam from kind eyes ever dawn upon the blind man's soul.

Thus a chill, death-like necessity forces him back upon himself, and relentless dungeon walls crush in his life. Sympathy may reach him still, like fresh winds or the singing of a bird stealing in through prison bars, but the pity given to irremediable loss often embitters its grief, or only revives it enough to make it sorrow more keenly again. A mind that is buried in the gloom of the grave must either feed upon itself or shrivel up in sour want and painfully waste away. So sad is the fate of the blind, so mournful their doom, that all kind natures are eager to aid their helplessness, while even the harshest will stand aside in hushed reverence to let them grope their way along. Cruelty must indeed be wantonly wicked to mock at or add to their misery, and therefore it is written: 'Accursed is he that maketh the blind man to wander from his path'; and again, 'Set not a stumbling-block in the path of the blind.'

In the clear, brilliant, exuberantly happy sunshine, which dreamily played the whole day long over the open plain of Jericho, smiling with quiet joy as it loitered in the meadows, rushing across the hot, white road to make sport of dusty travellers, dancing merrily from rock to rock, or laughing outright as it leaped along every little ripple of the river, just where it flashed in the full radiant splendour of its loveliness before the dazzled wall of the city, there sat, always, a man shadowed over by sepulchral gloom and shrouded in darkest sadness, for he was blind. He was in wretched want and friendless, so he came and sat there every day, sad and dark in the sunshine, begging, like some poor sightless creature, waiting for food or death from the hand of its master. Misery,

utter misery was his lot, yet he had only one sorrow, he was blind!

But at last the tremulous echo of a hope startled the drear solitude of his soul, for he heard that a great prophet had arisen in Israel who wrought strange miracles of mercy and who loved the poor. Timid at first and fearful of its own daring thought, this hope, palpitating with eager feverish longings, then fainting quite away with feeble quiverings of terror, then again reviving to hardy robustness of trust, waxed ever sturdier until it possessed all the blind man's soul, entrancing it, waking or sleeping, enrapturing all his nights and his days with dreams of delicious light. As he sits there darkling in the sunshine, but dreaming of its light, a murmur of many voices, low and reverential, smites on his heart and rocks it to and fro with whirling suspense. Scarcely can his lips force out the words, 'Who passes?' Yes, it is the Christ. Then bounding hope and quaking fear, outbursting trust and deep-recoiling awe, heave and wrestle and battle within him, till all the torture of his soul shakes the affrighted crowd with its wild and piercing cry of agony, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Those near would silence his strange clamour, but the blind man must now have his answer of life or death, and his anguish again shrieks forth, shrilling piteously, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Then Jesus commanded him to be brought before Himself and asked him, 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' The blind man uttered a half prayer, half moan, 'Lord, that I may see.' Mercy for him is light.

There is a blindness darker still. On a quiet

summer evening, not many years ago, as I loitered leisurely along a country road, just where it left the shadow of the overhanging hills, I paused in wonder, almost in worship, to gaze upon the loveliness of the scene. Away, away, stretched the valley in undulating slopes of soft green sward or golden corn, with fringe of flowering hedgerows and scattered clusters of small trees, while here and there cottages gleamed with simple whitewashed walls as they nestled near the winding way. In the distance, to the left, the great sea seemed to sleep, its dark, deep, level waters folded in repose beneath their arching canopy of motionless cloud and silent sky. Before me in the distance the mountains, faint and far, yet always wonderful, stood like sentinels of eternity, robed now in dazzling fold and flashing armour by the glory of the setting sun. For in the west the blood-red sun was slowly sinking, bathing the whole atmosphere in iridescent light, turning the inner edges of the clouds to gold and dyeing their hollow banks and stretching shreds to full-toned crimson or to ethereal scarlet ; while to the near right, through a tangle of forest trees the rays of light—straight, piercing, fantastic—changed the leaves to sparks of glittering sapphire and made the lines of huge stems glow with a sheen like polished steel but with a colour like molten metal. It was a dream of beauty.

But in the midst of it all the figure of a youth lightly bounded up towards where I paused. Tall, robust, athletic, he sprang forward with the stride of perfect strength and with the ease of perfect symmetry. As he came nearer I could see the dark brown curls straying from beneath his cap, the features straight

and fair with radiant bloom of healthful beauty. Then he stood before me, face to face, and I first saw his eyes. Oh, what a weird contrast! There was sight in them, but no reason.

As though a wandering hound escaped from chain and master had stopped in balancing friendship, fear, or rage to look up at a stranger, so those eyes, vacant of any meaning that was not animal, were fixed upon me. It was an idiot.

Oh, what to him was the glory of the sky or the message of the eternal sea? What lesson was there in the grandeur of the contemplative peaks? What warning in the sinking of the dying day-star? None! For him the lovely earth was only ground on which to run; for him the fields were only haunts where he might rob the nest or hunt the bird; the sky meant only warmth or wet, and the sunset only spoke of time for sleep. He saw it all indeed, but only as a brute. His brain was blind. The wisdom of the ages stored in books, the world's wit that sparkles freshly forth each day in speech, the social interweaving of life with life, the very notions of moral beauty or of moral worth, all these were hid to him. He had sight, poor boy, but only that of idiocy.

There is yet another blindness. It is the blindness of the soul. For man may walk erect on earth, surrounded by the sunshine, seeing with accurate eye the forms of strength or beauty, and with keen eye catching the subtle shades or delicate tones of colour; his brain may behold with truthful vision the material measure or meaning of things, and with right reasoning understand their power for work, or use for pleasure, yet all his horizons of truth and worth may be bounded

by barriers of physical fact. He may yet walk in pagan darkness, nor ever recognise within the world the life and loveliness made manifest to the man whose eyes are open to the revelations of the spirit.

Thus the empire of old Rome achieved a material success like which none other, before or since, has been witnessed in the world. The iron sword of her legions ruled the land. The iron prow of her galleys ruled the ocean. The iron law of her Senate laid its inflexible grasp upon the wills of men. The wealth of Egypt and of Araby was poured into her coffers. The art of Athens and of Corinth enriched her shrines and built her palaces. From her Capitol legislators of supreme human wisdom guided the destinies of the earth. Within her council-halls statesmen of supreme craft planned her maps and parcelled out her nations. Her forum was filled with orators, poets, philosophers, whose talent has toned all newer literature, and whose taste is still taught in all later universities.

But Rome was blind. The moral worth of men is mirrored in their ideals, and whatever truth or goodness there is in a people is shown by the view it takes of God. Now there is no higher soaring of thought, and therefore no truer proof of what is highest in intellect, than when the mind of man turns from time to eternity, from clay to soul, and expresses in definite type and in characteristic symbol what it sees of truth and worth and beauty in the spiritual world. Its religion is the test, the touchstone, and the type of a people's clear-sightedness in moral things. What did Rome see of the spirit? Nothing. Rome had no ideal of greatness brought down from heaven to

earth, but Rome flung up her own foul types of earth to fill the thrones of heaven. Her ideal of wisdom was Minerva, a virago, and her ideal of wit, Mercury, a thief; her ideal of work was Vulcan, a cripple, and her ideal of enjoyment Bacchus, a drunkard. Her very king among the gods was Jupiter, a profligate; and her queen, Juno, an adulteress. Rome's ideal of womanhood was Venus, who was a wanton; or it was Diana, who was heartless. Her ideal of grace, of beauty, and of love was therefore a synonym for sin and shame, or it was a synonym for callousness. All her gods and goddesses, like the mortals whom they tortured or corrupted, were ruled by three blind, pitiless sisters called the Fates. Thus a gloom of intense darkness enshrouded the Roman soul. Thus Rome was blind.

Our age is also blind. Does not this seem a rash thing to say? In one sense it is, because no age was ever so vain of its own success, so enamoured of its own conceits, so impatient of adverse criticism. But in another sense it is no rash statement that I make. It is as evident as it is true. Our age is blind. Within the Church there is light and there is knowledge. Outside the Church some rays can reach a little way. There is a glimmer and a twilight of truth, which lessens at least the outer darkness of men who will not indeed accept the Christian code, but who unconsciously learn from it a refinement of mind and a civilisation of manners unknown to pagan Rome. Yet still the Church is a light that shineth in darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it.

This difference, however, exists between the pagans of old Rome and the pagans of our modern

world—that Rome's ideal was personal; she made her vices and follies into gods and goddesses. Our age is impersonal; it changes its sins and superstitions into abstractions. Thus Minerva has been modernised into Science; Bacchus has been brought up to date as Hedonism; Venus poses as quite proper under the name of Altruism; the Fates are called the Nature of Things; Jupiter and Juno, with their immorality and adultery, are honoured by the age as Free-love and Divorce; while the banquet of the gods has become a communism of the passions.

Yes, yes! we have heard all that rhetoric about the glories of our age—no age so quick in invention, none so keen in work; no age so able in healing, none so rich in comfort; no age so exquisite in its art, none so exact in its science; no age so terrible in its war, none so commercial in its peace; no age so zealous in its education, none so fond of freedom.

Well, and should I grant you all that, I must add, no age so godless.

The age has sight to see all material progress, all practical advantage, all profit for use, and all power for pleasure. But the bowed-down reverence for God's Word, the loving recognition of God's worship, the beauty of chastity, or the heroism of humility, the grandeur of a simple life or the sweetness of a patient one, the vocation to pain or the duty of abnegation, these are gifts and graces not of earth but of heaven; not of sense but of soul; to these the modern pagan is blind. The wise men of our age themselves confess that beyond the realm of physical reality and of material fact they find nothing but 'eternal silence and impenetrable gloom.' Their

theories of life lead only to the darkness of death. Their sight fails them by the brink of the grave. They see in space no more than the movement of countless stars; in time no more than the changeful clash of constant force; in death they only see the removal of effete forms; in life only the 'survival of the fittest.' To them the brain is only a machine, the heart a muscle, the soul a phantom, and man the improved progeny of the ape. But the truths that have turned men's minds to thoughts more noble than the uses of the dust and more sublime than the pleasures of the brute, the motives written throughout history in the characters of the good men of the world, the unselfishness that can keep silent and the love that can remain pure, these our wise men know nothing of. Much less can they see God's light reflected in a human Church, or God's love incarnate in a human heart. The wise men of our age are blind.

Are you blind? The revelation of God, do you behold it? It is indeed a mystery but no myth. It is no phantom. It is no imperceptible power, no impalpable fact. It is a revelation that reaches us not through the hidden illumination merely of the soul, but through the evident shining of a visible Church. God's Word is uttered by human lips; God's grace is given by human hands; God's pity poured out through human hearts. Do you see it? 'The light that shineth in darkness,' God's truth taught by an infallible Church?

Do not then suspect the Church as though her teaching were a tyranny over thought. The necessity under which the Church lies of developing in her children every sort of serious study and every kind of

noble art is inherent in her nature and the spontaneous outcome of her growth. The completeness of her system, which weaves every thread of human interest into one marvellous design; the sublimity of her mysteries, which transcend all human understanding; the rigour of her proofs, which go to the root of logic; the reasonableness of her explanation, which brings the theologian's mind to the level of a child's capacity; the warmth of her devotion, which stirs with sympathetic throb the sweetest chords of human life; the homeliness of her love, which has a blessing for the cradle, for the marriage-couch, and for the grave; the thoroughness of her help, which guides the plough, the needle, and the sword; the antiquity of her reign, which began amidst peoples and kingdoms that have long since passed away; the immensity of her empire, which has been held throughout the ages over every race in every land; the vicissitudes of her existence, which have survived the clash of circumstance and the change of centuries; the freshness of her vigour and the buoyancy of her advance as, the only youthful thing in an old world, she scans in calm and secure triumph each new frontier of space and each succeeding horizon of time; the fulness of her promises, which stimulate every deep human want, every wide human aspiration, and every exalted human aim; the divinity of her mission, which is to lift man up to God; the humanity of her method, which is to bring God down to man; these, assuredly, are forces of fact as well as motives of mind that make it a very need of the Church's life to cultivate, to cherish, and to consecrate whatever in art or science, in study or in action, can be both true and real, both beautiful and good.

Furthermore, the Church, in her mission to teach, has received from Christ authority to tell men what is true. The law of faith must have the guarantee of infallibility, for Christ, Who owned 'all power in heaven and upon earth,' did not, would not, could not, give power to His Church to exact obedience to her command and acceptance of her teaching, under pain of damnation, without promising His own protecting presence, so that His Church should never impose anything wrong in morals or false in faith. Thus for her law and for her doctrine that Church has the warrant of God's Word.

Wherefore recognise that you stray from truth and turn towards sin if you ever fall away from the child-like reverence and child-like docility of the Catholic mind. Our Mother Church has the divine mission and the authority of Christ her Spouse to guide and teach us, her children. In the spirit then of children, not of critics; in the spirit of trusting hearers, not of suspicious cynics; in the spirit of faithful friends, not of bitter enemies—listen always humbly and lovingly to the Church, her pastors and her priests. Before the Church herself you must bow down in absolute submission, otherwise you are no Catholic. With those who, being but men, hold yet the sacred office of shepherds of the souls of men, you must not show the wilfulness of wandering sheep but the watchfulness of a faithful flock. Plainly the Catholic mind is always docile towards the Church and always reverent towards her teachers.

With regard to those outside the one true fold, how will the Catholic stand? There are two kinds of Liberalism—the one true and good, the other false

and wrong. The Liberalism which sets expediency in the stead of principle, which makes one's religious creed a mere matter of personal thought, and one's moral code a mere matter of personal taste—the Liberalism which means indifference towards truth in its tolerance towards error—such a Liberalism is an abdication of reason and a revolt against right. No knowledge, no wisdom, no science can be certain or sincere unless it is antagonistic to error. A mathematician is intolerant towards a wrong calculation; a musician intolerant towards a wrong note; a poet is intolerant towards a false rhythm; a merchant intolerant towards a false weight. So, too—proclaim it frankly and fearlessly—Catholic faith is intolerant towards heresy, and Catholic holiness intolerant towards sin.

Yet there is a true Liberalism. It is inflexible in principle but bending in its application. It is implacable towards falsehood but large-minded towards the mistaken. It is ruthless towards crime but large-hearted towards the criminal. In a word, it holds truth and virtue to be absolutely right, falsehood and vice to be absolutely wrong; yet it is too wise not to know that mortal minds are feeble and mortal wills are weak, that the wisest of us make mistakes and the best of us sometimes fall; and therefore the true Catholic with a pity that is not proud and with a clear-sightedness that is not harsh, bewails the misfortune or the fault of the spiritually blind.

Wherefore love the light! Give thanks to God that your eyes are open to the sunshine. Behold its radiance as it makes your whole life strong and glad and beautiful. See the glory of the heaven that awaits

you. See your path of life with countless blessings budding everywhere, with happy faith to guide your steps, with happy hope to cheer your heart, with happy love to consecrate your soul. Even your tears are only dewdrops of the dawn of heaven, and your sorrows only passing clouds of earth that bring your harvest of eternity. Look at the sunshine, and love the light. One day all doubt, all darkness, and all death shall disappear before the glory of the risen Christ.

But that day has not yet dawned, and still around about us is the gloom of Paradise Lost, and sometimes within our soul there may be a night black and dismal as the darkness of the blind. But when from the depths of our woe, out through the gloomiest despair of our darkness, as spectres of a dead past, sinfully killed and shamefully buried, rise up to haunt our soul; as the mocking, bewildering, treacherous present slips away from our grasp, leaving behind in our hand not gold but filth, not living worth but foul corruption; as weird forebodings of a future shrouded in unknown horror moan dismally around our life with prophetic warnings like sentences of doom; as misgivings about all that is good drain away our strength; as the fascinations of all that is evil creep over our reeling senses like drunken sleep; then, while we hopelessly sit under the shadow of death or madly grope in the gloom, when at last we cry for help to heaven, that cry shrills above all the clamouring noise of the world, above the hosannas of the saints, above all the rapturous canticles of the angels, until it rings round the throne of God, and vibrates with warm throbbings within the very heart of the Great Lover

of men. In our misery and our blindness, when we cry aloud, 'like infant crying in the night—an infant crying for the light, and with no language but a cry'—when we cry to Him, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus will open our eyes to the sunshine, saying, as He said of old, 'Thy faith hath made thee whole!'

Oh, the glorious sunshine! Do you see it? We have come forth to life from the breath of the Great Spirit, Who is the loving Father of all, that by noble use of liberty and by happy use of love we might return home again to be welcomed with deathless rapture and crowned with eternal worth. When sin smote man with the sorrow of unending night and death, God wedded His nature to our own in unity of person, giving His own life to lift us up, His own blood to wash away our sins, His own flesh to feed our souls, His own heart to win and warm and bless our hearts, His own tears to soften our sorrow, His own Mother to love us. His Mother, the incarnate loveliness of created purity, tenderness, and worth, what is most beautiful in strength, most noble in winningness, most gentle in majesty, most sublime in simplicity, most exquisite by nature, most admirable by grace, clearest in thought, brightest in knowledge, kindest, sweetest, truest, deepest in affection, in sympathy, in fondness—Mary—God's Mother! we cry to thee! Do thou bring us to Him, Mother bring us from out the darkness! Lead us to the light! Show unto us the sunshine, Mother, that we may see! Mother, Mother, O Mother! show unto us the Blessed Fruit of thy womb, Jesus, now and for evermore! Amen.

'MY SIN IS EVER AGAINST ME'

My sin is ever against me.—Ps. l. 5

FEW men or women understand the reality of life. Children have little toys and grown people have big ones. Both call things by names of their own imagining. Both spin out of their own fancies fairy webs wherewith to trick out or disguise what is true and solid. Both look upon life as a time of play marred too often by hours of drudgery, or as a time of irksome restraint, with too few bursts of freedom and of frolic. Both take life to be either a plaything to be dallied with or a task to be shirked. Both are guided by glamour, won by glitter, frightened by phantoms. Both are fascinated by bright colour, subdued by melodious sound, captivated by soft touch, enamoured of what is sweet to the taste. There are toys of all kinds to suit all frivolous fancies. There are dolls for one and fashions for another. One can play at marbles, another at making money. One can build houses of cards, another may prop up his ambition with cunning and with fraud. One may be amused with bubbles of soap, another with bubbles of fame. One may delight in killing flies or teasing cats, another may kill men, harass human hearts, or ruin immortal souls. What matter whether one be taken up with sweetmeats or with business, with kites or with

statesmanship, with masks or with social life, with the braying of a penny trumpet or with the clamour of a mob, with the curling of a ringlet or with the downfall of a king. All are toys. They may be good enough wherewithal to while away an idle hour. They should not waste in foolish unrealities the thoroughly wakeful moments of our serious life.

Children have little toys. The dreams they live in are innocent; their mistakes trifling. That is why we can love while we laugh at their foolishness. Grown people have big, clumsy, dangerous toys. The dreams they live in are wilful states of empty idiocy, or of passionate frenzy, or of sullen, louring, malignant stupor, or of convulsive yet meaningless upheavals of wailing. They are dreams of sinful joy or of sinful sorrow, of sinful love or of sinful hate. They are all dreams, wilful dreams, and full of sin. They are all sinful dreams. That is why we can neither love nor laugh at such foolishness. That is why we shudder and tremble and ask, Is life real or are men mad?

Children are not always childish. We should be wise were we sometimes to lay aside our toys and foolishness in order to fix our earnest gaze upon what, behind the shifting changing mists and clouds of sense, stands firm and changeless with the eternal strength of truth.

What in life is false and what is true? What is hollow and what real? What is the reality of life? If there be no such reality, then indeed all in life is dream and shadow, nor is there any truth. If there be such a reality, then surely it is a real worth. It must be really worthy of the real love and real work of a really earnest man.

The reality of life is twofold. There is the reality

of God and there is the reality of sin. The one is the reality of love of heaven; the other is the reality of hate of hell. While upon earth, man's life is by his own choice turned towards one or towards the other. It is brightened and blessed with good, or it is warped and blasted by evil. Here, then, is the reality of life, the reality of sin in the face of God.

We might learn what this terrible reality of sin means by seeking out its causes or by watching its results. We might remember that in one instant it changed a bright, worshipful, sublime, rapturous seraph into a grovelling, hating, and hateful demon; that it tarnished for ever the purity and splendour of an angel with all the filth and foulness of hell. We might ponder over the ruin which it wrought upon our earth, banishing two lovely and noble presences from their home of Paradise, and driving them forth, abject mean creatures of shame and sorrow, with a curse upon them, to bear cursed children of shame and sorrow to the very end of time. We might meditate on what the very shadow of sin brought upon the stainless dignity of the God-made man.

Such thoughts are good. They teach us what life really means. But, perhaps, they sometimes fail to reach our inmost mind. They do not always startle our heart from its dreams. It will be well also to think deeply and often on what sin is itself, on what the very nature of it is, in order not to miss the light and truth which such meditation brings. We must bring sin near to us, watching it cautiously and closely, not looking at it from a distance as if it were the sin of someone else, but looking at it as it has entered into our own soul. It will help us to understand more

keenly and more vividly what sin is—the malice, the wildness, the hatefulness, the abomination of it when we know how far it has made its home in our heart. I will then go over in spirit the secret story of my sin from childhood to this hour. I will recall the first faint blotches of its threatening growth, the heedless slips, the random faults of early reason, the failings from goodness more and more known, more and more wilful, more and more serious as the light grew fuller and duty plainer, until the wayward whim became reckless rebellion, until the silly impulse was fixed in thought-out malice, until fitful yieldings and fretful impressions became hardened into deliberate sin. I will let my soul like the phantoms that haunt doomed places follow sadly and silently the erring steps of my youth. I will pass through years misspent, counting them one by one, passing again through the days and the places filled with wretched memories of my wrong-doing, while before me arise spectres of the good whom I slighted or hindered or thwarted, and of the bad whose evil deeds were the cause or the result of the wreck of my own soul's innocence. What a terrible vision for most men and women is the vision of their own past sin! How few souls can meet the glance of God straightforwardly and say they know that they have never once by mortal sin stained His honour and their own! Even those who in their past have no dread skeleton of mortal sin to hide away, must own to the meanness, indelicacy, shabbiness, coarseness, and baseness of sin which stops short of killing the soul, but wounds, disfigures, and maims it. All of us, then, must bow down with broken spirit and humbled heart, acknowledging in bitter but wholesome truth that we

have done a wrong which we can never undo, that we have ruined what we of ourselves cannot repair, that we have taken into our own heart and soul the only evil which is real—the monstrous and most loathsome iniquity of sin. We are all sinners and our sin is ever against us. Wherefore with lowly sorrow, at the feet of God, let us think over, that we may be henceforth wiser, sin's disorder, sin's insolence, sin's silliness, and sin's horror.

Throughout the creation beneath us there is due submission to law and unvarying exactness of action. Blindly, yet steadily, ceaselessly and surely, the atoms of earth lock themselves together to build up the universe. From the tiny heave of a wave of light through the undulous ocean of ether to the tremendous flashing through space of the mass of a mighty star, from the sheer strength of rocks that hold up mountains to the tremulous quiver of vapour that floats above the air, there is no creature false to its nature. Each acts truly and rightly as it is fitted to act.

Therefore is each good in its kind, and therefore can each help to the good that is in all. Thus too in the freshness and fruitfulness of plants, as well as in the growth and use of animals, there is unswerving obedience to a rule which is dictated by each nature and which aims at each nature's perfection, beauty, and worth. All this order, all this harmony, this grace and majesty, is the outcome of necessity.

What would happen if some creature made up of matter were allowed to choose its own destiny—if instead of being blindly hurried forward it were allowed not merely to work out but with thought to understand, and with heart to love, its own strength and

good and comeliness? Alas! we have our answer from within ourselves.

Man can and does thwart and ruin the order of his own nature. When all else is admirable, man makes of himself a blot upon the face of creation. When all else is divinely harmonised, only man's work jars against the musical rhythm of nature. If a lily could accept or refuse the heavenly beauty of its colour or the graceful shape of its petals, if a rose could freely stint its fragrance or dull the fresh sweetness of its blushing bloom, if the glorious forest trees could curb the lordly sweep and mighty swell of their branches and crush and cramp them into knitted masses, tangled, bruised, and bruising heaps and lumps of warped wood, might we not hope that the beauty of perfume and colour and form should yet not be wanting in the world, for that no creature would freely choose its own ruin, ugliness, insignificance, and death? Yet, alas! the minds and hearts and souls of men are by themselves made vile and foul and hideous, for men do freely let sin poison their lives with plague-germs of festering rottenness, desecrate them with filth and wither away their strength and loveliness with the curse of all curses less than damnation, the curse of sin, which is the coming shadow of hell and the gloom of the grave of the soul.

What is sin? It is disorder in the soul. It is the hissing, rancorous sting of vengeful spite; or the venomous snarling of envy; or the desperate charge of fury bursting away from its bonds; or the slow, sickening stillness of torpid decay; or the bloated heaviness, the reeling insanity of indulgence; or the swine-like leer and loathsome love of brutishness.

Sin is the dethroning of reason, the triumph of the rabid rout of passions which drag and dishonour their queen in the mire. The eye, which should image the soul, is fired with lurid light to look for what is base. The hand of creation's master becomes the slave of desires of earth. The form which should nobly look up to heaven and reflect the light of God's face is bent towards the clay beneath it and buries its hopes in matter.

Reason is torn down beneath the hoof of passion and forced to give its light and strength that the sin may be darker and more fulsome. Sin is a horribly grotesque upsetting of order, so that Heaven's gifts are trampled down and immortal brows are crowned with filth.

Alas! for the noble mind that can know the secrets of heaven! Alas! for the God-like will that should mightily rule with the loyal freedom of God's children! Alas! for the heart bought by the blood of our Redeemer! Alas, alas! for the soul, the sister of the angels! They are all defiled, down-thrown, hurled from their high place to cower and grovel and slave under the rod of sin. 'Amen, Amen,' saith Christ, 'Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin' (John viii. 34). There they are, those angelic powers chained to the vile service of sin. There they are, bound prisoners of a master who can rack, torture, ruin, deflower, and make foul not only the earthen vessel but the God-like spirit that gives it life. There they are, lashed to the chariot-wheels of sin, dragged along with the whirling violence of passion, until the mind that could once think the pure, calm thoughts of heaven grows dizzy and dazed, becoming choked

up and stupidly drunken with the brutish imaginings exhaled by the putrid abominations amidst which it reels. The will, which had once the serene strength of a seraph, trails feebly and shamefully after whatever perverted instinct of the human beast chances to rule for the moment. The heart which might have been so lovely in the frail yet winning beauty of human gracefulness glorified by spiritual worth, the heart which might have been so divinely great in the very lowliness of its nature, the heart which might have had in one clear, brilliant virtue the dignity of an archangel and the simplicity of a child, the heart in which might have shone the marvellous union of all that God's infinite pity can do to raise up weakness, and of all that God's infinite power can do to crown righteousness, this heart is now eaten up with creeping sin, wasted away with decaying sin, bleeding forth corrupting sin, flinging forth germs of polluting sin, destroyed and destroying with the fetid pestilence of sin. Alas, alas! sin is slavery. and who but God could fathom the depth of disorder brought about by the slavery of the soul.

Think further of the infinite insolence of sin. With the aid of that fancy which you so often waste in idle dreams or warp with fantastic falsehoods, try now from the simple images around you to gather truer and clearer knowledge of the real awfulness of sin.

When in the summer time you strayed along some path under the shade of tall trees, as a quiet sigh of the breeze sent a dead leaf rustling past you, did you think of what a little thing is that piece of parched and russet fibre? Only a dead leaf, while all around you the soft green leaves are basking in the sunlight

and sleepily floating on the quiet waves of the wind! What is one leaf to the multitudinous wealth of foliage flowing all over the graceful branches of the beech-tree under which you stand? What is one leaf to the fabulous number of leaves which live and breathe in the leafy world of a forest? What is one leaf to the endless profusion of leaves which bud or thrive or fail the whole wide world over? But, again, what are all the leaves which have lived throughout the ages from the first green dawn of the life of the primeval forests compared with the living majesty of a soul? What is all that inanimate life, that thoughtless beauty, that purposeless strength, that unknowing life compared with one soul which can learn and love? Yet, again, what is one human life compared with the teeming population of one great city? Each day men die, but the great city heeds not, cares not, knows not, for what are a few lives that pass away to its own huge life which lives on its wild bustle of pleasure and business? What, then, is one human life to the lives of all the men who toil or idle, suffer or sin, laugh or weep upon the earth?

Once, again, what is that one dead leaf of the bygone summer to all the souls which have ever come forth from the breath of God with a life kindled within them that shall not die for ever? Now think of this in quiet, sober earnest, for it is simple truth; there is less distance and less difference between that one dead leaf and all immortal souls together, aye with the angels too, in their countless legions of sublime spiritual glory, than there is between all things that have been made or could be made and the maker of them.

Compared with God nothing has any weight or worth ; before Him all things are as though they were not. It is simply impossible to make any true comparison at all between God and the universe, for all this universe can be no more than a faint adumbration, which by an analogy of light mingled with darkness, of being inwoven with nothing, gives a far-off reflection of some stray rays from the splendour of His throne. However unlike created things may be one to another, there is between them all a likeness at least in being and in essence which they do not share with God. It is not so much in height of majesty, or absoluteness of power, or sublimity of attribute that God excels and infinitely surpasses us. It is not really a question of infinite distance at all. It is a question of infinite difference in kind.

Hence it is true that only God's own infinite wisdom can realise how utterly He is, not only above but outside and beyond all perfection which He can create. Now pause for a moment to ask yourself what kind of insolence it should be were one mad enough to set that one dried leaf against all the multitudes of men and all the serene hosts of angelic spirits.

Yet such folly, absurd in the very thought of it, could not even compare in rank offensiveness with the audacity of a soul which should dare to set its will against the will of God. Far and faint in the remoteness of abject insignificance which is his own, the sinner writhes upwards to send forth insult against the infinite kingliness of God. Were all the angels and all the saints to hesitate in duty to God's wish, or listen lightly to His Word, it were an insult, an outrage, an abomination which endless hells of measureless torture

could not atone for, since no finite tears or blood or agony could repair an injury or set right a wrong done to infinite honour.

What, then, when a vile thing of sin makes war on God, defiles God's image stamped upon it, violates God's law written within it, outrages God's honour which is bound up with its well-doing, and overthrows God's glory which is one with the right fulfilment of its life? Surely, surely, this is insolence unutterably shameful, appalling in its mad audacity, hideous in its sheer wantonness, ghastly with the terror and threat and awe about it of immeasurable guilt. Who could think of it and not tremble? A creature to defy its Creator, an abject thing that crawls upon the earth to rebel against the Almighty, a worm to dishonour God!

There is no sadder, nor is there upon earth a more terrible, sight than the meaningless glare of a madman's eyes. In them we see gleams of reason fitful, unconnected, and passing, but we also see the distorted phantoms of frenzy, flinging over the mind a desolating darkness and breaking its steady light into lurid and misleading flashes.

Hear what the lunatic says when in tremulous and desperate earnestness he whispers the solemn words of a secret which would make you laugh with convulsive outburst of merriment if it were said jokingly. But he is not joking. He speaks with the fearful seriousness of an agonising soul. You turn away shuddering from the scene. Listen to the exultant chuckle of that other maniac. What is he so delighted about? Some inconceivable absurdity or some criminal enormity. Now let me ask you very quietly and very seriously whether there be not a form of

madness, strangely dangerous yet strangely subtle, strangely widespread yet strangely overlooked? Do not answer hurriedly the question which you put yourself. Think calmly over it, for it needs thought. But think earnestly over it, for there is no question so momentous. It may be that you yourself are a victim to this frenzy. Let me put the question plainly before you. When men are mad, reason's action is totally or in part unhinged. What is left of it only serves to render life's ruin more appalling and more hopeless. Yet, withal, there is no fault; the ruin, terrible as it is, partakes of the nature of an earthquake, or of an avalanche, or of some fell disease. It is a physical effect of physical causes. We bow before it, though we tremble and lament, for it is no doing of mortal man but of an unseen power whose mysterious action we cannot follow or control. Would it not be more horribly sad, more full of wonder and terror, were a man to be wilfully mad? Think of it! Reason not overpowered from without, but herself blinding her own eyes in deliberate suicide of soul; reason not hindered or warped by uncontrollable causes, but set astray by unabashed lying to self in self-chosen wanton insanity; Reason not dethroned by rebellion, but stepping down herself from her own high place to wallow in mire and filth, knowingly setting her sceptre under the feet of animal instincts, willingly flinging her crown to be the sport of fantasies such as rule dumb brutes, and, shamefullest of all, herself exulting in this most miserable madness, the madness that is known, chosen, and loved. Can there be such maniacs? Alas, alas! there are. Is it madness for a man to fling away all happiness in order to gain what he knows

thoroughly well to be real wretchedness? Is it madness for a man to do what he knows to be a real wrong to himself, and what he hopes and wishes, as he hopes for heaven, bitterly to repent of ever after? Is it madness for a man to buy an honour empty as the passing breeze, or a pleasure faithless and fading as fallen leaves, or a treasure worthless as the dust that flies from the face of the earth, with the sacrifice of the happy home of heaven, the ownership of Paradise, and a glory true and lasting as the life of God?

Sin is a deliberate offence against God. Think of the wild folly, the ghastly silliness, the frantic guilt bound up with that. It means the fading away of God's peace from the soul, where in its stead there crowd hideous dreams broken by weird shapes of mocking falsehood or threatening spectres of truth. It means dead innocence, poisoned pleasures, troubled rest, vivid terrors of the night and clouded hours of the day, memories full of bitterness, work hampered by uneasy afterthought, repose conscious of hidden danger, hopes recoiling in apprehension of evil, this world slipping away from the sinner's grasp and no hold on another. It means the relentless echoes of conscience jarring against thoughts and desires, dinning into the sinner's ears amidst the bustle of life and whispering to him in the silence of slumber, there is sin in thy soul—sin! sin! It means, too, that a child of God turns away from God's house—his birthright, from the fellowship of the saints, from all that is noble and sure and bright; from eternal peace and love in the happy land of the living. It means that an angel-like soul chooses to become a demon; to wallow in all that is foul and bad, and thus casts itself

down to hell, to the pit of torture, fury, despair, and never-ending damnation. Sin means that thought is wilfully warped so as to see things only falsely; that will is wilfully wrenched from right to wrong, from real good to real evil. Sin means that reason is wilfully unreasonable and will wilfully loving evil. Sin, then, is wilful madness.

Truly those who commit sin are enemies to their own souls (Job xii. 10). Their life is miserable, and so much the more wretched as they strive more obstinately to shut their eyes and stop their ears while they shout out over the world that their days are bright and happy. But most of all is their death miserable, for 'the sting of death is sin' (1 Cor. xv. 56). To the sinner death is more than miserable; it is horrible; it is damnation.

Again, 'The wages of sin, is death' (Rom. vi. 23). So that we have these two twin evils, death and sin, holding in ghastly triumph the undivided empire of the earth.

The souls of the saints are indeed unsubdued. although even they are conquered by that death which was bred of sin, and which means the crumbling of the earthen vessel. But the sinner sinks in double death; in that death which is a rotting of the body, and in that death which is a rotting of the soul. Sin kills the soul with the stealthiness of consumption, with the sureness of cancer growth, with the foulness of leprosy.

Have you ever watched the fading of some young life that you loved? The red lips became blanched and thin. The ruddy hue of health passed away from the rounded, laughing cheek as the brilliant colour of day passes away from the clouds at evening, leaving them to the cold, thin, mournful glances of the moon.

The quiet, lustrous beamings of the soul were dimmed in its eyes to dream-like depths of melancholy, or changed at times to sudden agitated flashes of unnatural fire. The hands grew colourless and pinched. The whole frame sank, and the once light, hurried step grew gradually slow. Spring came, but through the songs of the birds, the happy hum of the bee, and the distant laughter of children you heard near you the bitter, hard cough and the ever troubled breathing of the dying. The flowers and budding trees looked so hopeful and so lovely until you saw someone you dearly loved creep about amongst them for the last time. Silently, slowly, stealthily, death came. Think, now, of the loveliness and vigour of the soul before the seeds of sin are sown. God loves it, the blessed angels claim kindred with it, and it has within it the grace and strength, indwelling, of the infinite Spirit of Peace. Oh! how can such beauty be marred or such strength be overcome? Ah! with the tones of a giddy laugh, or with the inflashing wave of a random look, or with the sudden birth of a foolish thought a germ of sin has entered there. It is not cast out and it fastens first and then festers. The stealthy work of disease has begun and the end of all of it is death; the death of an immortal soul. Alas! for the life that is gone, a life of immortal hopes, boundless aspirations, strong, pure love, noble deeds, nobler patience, and most noble loyalty to honour and to truth. All these fade as the disease stealthily grows, for these are graces of life and sin is death.

Where sin has entered it is certain to destroy. It is sure in its action even though it may be slow. Surely it eats its own way on; surely it creeps into the life

on which it feeds ; surely bloom and health are blighted at its touch ; surely its path is marked by the corruption which it leaves. It may, indeed, by desperate effort and with torture be cut from out the character as with the surgeon's knife, but it will burst out afresh and renew again elsewhere its desolating havoc. Only God's power can stop its course or cure the soul on which has fallen this living curse of death. For in real earnest the growth of sin is like the growth of cancer. It is sure. Yes ! Sin brings the soul's death surely. It spreads like cancer. It is foul as cancer, too. Nay ! it is worse than cancer. Sin is foul as leprosy. Thus in the written Word of God leprosy is ever taken as the very type of sin. Hence, was the leper bidden to wash in the waters of the Jordan, prefiguring the divine virtue of baptismal waters given to us by Christ. Hence, again, the leper when cured by God was bidden to show himself to the priest, prefiguring the healing power of the Sacrament, where the self-accusing sinner is judged, not in anger but in love. Hence, was the leper called 'unclean,' while the just 'have been made clean in the Blood of the Lamb.'

Do you know what leprosy is ? It is too foul for words, too foul even for thought. We will only remember that the leper was accursed, and that a curse went out from him. He was a foul spot on the face of the earth, and all was blasted which he touched. However sweet the breeze from playing with the flowers, however fresh from leaping along mountain tops or dancing through old forests, however pure from bathing in the salt foam of the sea, yet from the moment the leper breathed upon it that breeze was foul and carried a plague on its wings. However clear

and sparkling and full of health the stream, when the leper touched it with his lips it was polluted, flowing on with a death in every drop. The very ground the leper trod was foul, and therefore was he driven forth from where men dwelt to wander in desert places, crying out from afar, in warning full of horror: 'Unclean! unclean!' Sin and leprosy! Leprosy and sin! Foulness of all most foul! O God! think, my brother! What if there be leprosy in thy soul?

'My sin is ever against me.' 'We have sinned,' and our sin is ever against us unto sorrow. If we be in sin our sin is ever against us unto wrath. For what may come hereafter let sin stand ever against us unto terror and unto warning. This is the dread reality of life. Out of reality, however awful, comes truth which is always good, and out of truth comes under God the life that is really bright and blessed. Let sin, then—not the sin that is far off, but the sin that is our own—stand always against us in its real truth. We must learn to know it not as we know the clouds when they are scarlet and crimson and gold with iridescent sunlight, but as we know them when we breathe their chill vapour, or cower under their wet dripping, or tremble amidst the din of their thunder and the forked fury of their electric death. Let us learn to know sin not as we know the sea from pictures, or from the wooing of its smiling depths when we stand on safe rocks, but as we know the sea when we are helplessly alone amidst the caressing treachery of its all-enfolding waters or stunned by the stroke of its wrathful surges. We must learn to know sin not in dreams of fools or children, but in fact. Let it stand ever against us in its own true unsightliness, in its

insolence, in its madness, in its foulness. Then shall we with God's grace stand against it, too, with disquiet and with aversion, with contempt and anger, with brave fear and noble dread of the very sight or sound of it, with horror and loathing, with all the force and fury of every feeling and passion which can rise up and stand against, and war down and trample upon what is most baneful of all evil and most filthy of all that is foul.

This is real life, to avoid the only real evil—sin, and to work out the only real good—God's will. All else passes like morning mist or sunset glamour, like dreams.

Are our dreams pleasant or are they sad? Does it make much matter? Are we dreaming or are we awake? Are our toys pretty or are we wretched because we have not the toys we wish for? Are we children still or are we fools? See! there is a terrible reality in life, the reality of sin in the face of God. The reality of sin means the reality of madness and guilt under fantastic painting of dreams and under fantastic shapes of toys.

The reality of God means, for those who serve Him in spirit and in truth, a real life—a life of real sorrow for the sins of years gone by, a life of real manhood in the living present by real battle against sin, a life of real beatitude in the fuller life to come, when as there shall be no sorrow, so much more shall there be no sin. The reality of sin shall have passed away annihilated by the reality of the vision, where seeing God we shall become like unto Him, in exhaustless energy of repose and exhaustless peacefulness of rapture, for it is written: 'To him that shall overcome, I will give the crown of life.'

DRUNKENNESS

No one can be ignorant of the havoc which Drunkenness works among our people, nor can anyone ignore the need there is of individual efforts, combined with concentrated action, in order to save our nation from the disaster which this arch-demon threatens to inflict. We all know much about the ruin which it has already wrought—material beggary and moral degradation; idiocy of the brain and paralysis of the hand; foulness in the heart and hatred in the home; dishonour to the woman and brutishness to the man; treachery to the citizen and obliteration to the nation. We have all heard much about its causes and its results, about its inevitable evils and its possible antidotes, about its weird fascination, its charm that is like Satan and its hold that is like hell. We must have all learned that wherever this demon has entered all other demons crowd in afterwards in riotous triumph. But perhaps we may not all have thoroughly realised how this vice above all other vices is appallingly impartial, persistently implacable, and remorselessly ruthless.

The vice of Drunkenness is impartial. It will live in the cellar or in the attic, but it will also intrude into the drawing-room or nestle in the boudoir. It will revel in the studio of the artist or in the study of the scholar, just as it will riot in the gin-palace or in the

den of shame. It does not disdain to brood in rags and filth within the hovel, while it will make itself at home in the mansion of the luxurious merchant or in the castle of the noble lord. It will creep after the waif who huddles into a corner of the lane-way, and it will sit beside the monarch on his throne. It is terribly impartial. It staggers the step of the robust youth and it disfigures the face of the beautiful maiden; it palsies the hand of the bread-winner and it blotches the cheek of the white-haired spinster. Nor is it merely the brains of the dullard which it makes to reel into helpless stupor, but it will fire to fierce insanity the head gifted with rare talent, and it will steep in empty idiocy or madden with delirious dreams the genius fitted to teach his century or to bless his fatherland. Drunkenness is magnificent in its impartiality. Do not think that it is satisfied with degrading the weak will or the worthless character; nay, it will melt the man of iron into a maudlin fool; it will seize upon the hero and upon the heroine and make them chatter like grinning apes or grovel mid mud like fat swine. It strikes down the heartless cynic and the warm-hearted enthusiast, the sweetheart and the pedant, the peasant and the priest, the publican and the Pharisee, the *prima donna* and the clown, the sinner and the saint. The impartiality of Drunkenness is appalling.

Furthermore, Drunkenness is persistent and implacable. It may first woo its way to pretty lips by the sweet taste and exhilarating novelty of champagne or by the innocent measure of warm red wine ordered for delicate health; or it may begin by the furtive sips of beer which the tradesman's child has learned

to like. Its strong and secure hold upon its victim may be so stealthily fastened as to escape consciousness, and so slowly riveted as to disarm suspicion. It may wait for long years with persistent patience, while ceaselessly growing in power, so as to usurp an irremediable mastery before the danger is even known; or it may work no more evil during an honourable lifetime than to bring about occasional slight slips or rare and random indiscretions, until the venerable and beloved old man is drawing near to the peaceful sunset of a brilliant and fruitful day. Then, when the labours of his life have reached rich harvest, when his name has become a synonym for honour, a symbol of noble character, and a warrant for every kind deed; when his fellow-citizens trust him as a patriot and love him as a man; when his children's children have grown up about him in innocence, in affection, in blameless conduct, in energetic duty, looking up to him in reverent allegiance as to a patriarch worthy of the golden age of any nation, then the implacable Drunkenness which glided into his young blood nearly a century ago, and which has been lurking there in ambush all this while, will assert its implacable supremacy; and when it has driven him in disgrace from public trust; when it has made him a drivelling subject for the stranger's scorn or a ridiculous butt for the cynic's laughter; when it has outraged all sense of decency in his home; when it has degraded him to blasphemous oath, to word of filth and deed of shame; when it has turned friendship into disgust, reverence into horror, and love into loathing, then it will bring him to a drunkard's death.

Then, and only then, will it let the drunkard die,

for Drunkenness is remorseless, pitiless, ruthless. The drunkard will not die and we may not kill him. He will meet with many an accident, but he will escape. He will fall into many an illness, but he will recover. He will squander the means, and he will exhaust the attention, of his household. He will selfishly monopolise the unselfish watchfulness of those who still pity him, and he will thanklessly trade on the unmerited sympathy of those who even still love him ; and when they have thought with a sense of unconscious relief that he is dying at last a happy death, he will become healthier than before ; and when they fondly hope, as they had so often hoped fondly before, that he is reclaimed and warned, he will return with fresher appetite, with keener relish, and with more reckless heartlessness back again to drink. He will not die and we may not kill him. First, he will break the heart of the woman whom once he loved ; he will insult her ; he will strike her ; he will kick her, and he will be quite merry over this playful little proof of his manliness. He will breed children of Drunkenness ; sons to idle, or to sponge, or to steal, or to curse, or to blaspheme, or to be paid patriots, or to be unpaid gaol-birds, but at any rate to develop into worthless, heartless, brutal drunkards ; daughters, too, he will bring up in order to let them shiver and starve into human skeletons in their inhuman home ; or he will drive them out to haunt the midnight street like emissaries of hell, or to bury their sin and shame amid the living putrefactions of some drunken den. He will not die and we may not kill him. He will bring to death the peace, the comfort, the happiness, the very idea of home. He will kill the health, the

hope, the honour, the innocence of those whom he should cherish as the very life of his own soul; but he will not die and we may not kill him. The liberty of the citizen is so sacred in the eyes of patriotic dunces or philanthropic fools that they insist on protecting the drunkard's liberty to make slaves of his wife and children, to trample on every human right of theirs, and to jeer at every right of theirs that is divine. The good, the peaceful, the virtuous, the law-abiding have no right against the drunkard. His liberty as a citizen is sacred to patriots and to philanthropists. His liberty is also sacred to Drunkenness. He must be free to ruin, to deflower, to disgrace, to damn. So rules the ruthless demon Drunkenness. The drunkard must survive to do the work of this remorseless and ruthless devil. The drunkard will not die and we may not kill him.

Nor is it only in isolated instances or rarely that this vice achieves its full success. It does not always openly parade its power, nor does it always exhibit to the public gaze the unending black list of its victims, but its triumph is universal. It dominates every class of society, every grade, almost every home. The families are few where there is not at least one drunkard. It paralyses the people's power of work; it squanders the wealth of the nation. It has been calculated that the amount of money spent each year on drink comes to about three pounds sterling for each single human soul. Were this vast sum spent in wise and reproductive ways, the country would soon change from a desert to a garden, from dilapidated towns or squalid villages to happy hamlets or stately cities. The scientific and complete draining of the

land would change the bitter plains of waste marsh and sour soil into rich pasture or fertile field. The mountains, now bare and barren, covered then with far-reaching forests, would offer a new wealth to the merchant as well as a new wonder to the artist. The forest-crowned mountains and the well-drained valleys would change our climate from incessant drip and soaking moisture into an atmosphere healthful for the harvest as well as exhilarating for man's energy and bracing for man's work. Safe and frequent harbours round our shores would be crowded with good boats bringing the spoils of the ocean to feed our poor and to enrich our markets. Industries would thrive, for sober workmen would do good work and earn good wage. To material prosperity there would be added thousandfold the true comforts of life and the deep contentment of holy and happy homes.

But now, as though some strange and fatal curse lay upon our land, poverty, misery, indolence, hopelessness brood in squalid swarm from sea to sea. Would you wish to realise how true this is? Climb, then, by night the mountain-side whence you can look out towards the dim and distant city. Yet through the dark shadows you can see, above the spot where the big city seems to sleep, a strange, weird, lurid light that startles the clouds above it with faint, ghastly gleam as though the heavens were being contaminated by a reflection of the fire of hell. Down from the mountain pass in through the streets, and you will see now no reflection but the actual blaze from the hell of the demon Drink. Everywhere from the magnificent windows of the demon's palaces the dazzling splendour streams, showing within its halls

the orgies of Alcohol; and showing, as they flit from shadow to shadow, through the radiance on the pathway, the forms and shapes of the satellite vices that follow in the steps and triumph in the triumph of the vice drink. Everywhere drink prospers and everywhere its victims rot in poverty and riot in sin. Wherever a few hovels are huddled together there is one, and as a rule only one, house—it is the public-house. In towns and cities the number of public-houses reaches to an incredible percentage. In one city it is said that there is a public-house for every hundred adults. In the capital of Ireland, were the public-houses to be set side by side they would form a superb boulevard five miles long, a royal road that does not lead to heaven.

When under the old dispensation of Jehovah's temporal rule the people were to be punished for their crime, God gave to Israel's king the choice between famine, pestilence, and war. The wise king wisely chose pestilence as the least terrible scourge that could afflict a nation. If only, in his great mercy, God would lift the curse of Drunkenness from off our land, even though in its stead some fell disease should decimate our race, it would be a boon, a blessing. Were cholera with its swift peril and paralysing panic, or smallpox with its fierce havoc and fetid horror, or the Black Death with its unknown stroke and nameless foulness, to darken our life with the shadows of despair; were a strange, unnatural silence to hush the city's busy hum, while a strange, unnatural stillness should empty its streets of their human streams and stop the tide of their traffic; were the dismal processions of the dead to usurp the exclusive sway of the pavements where

business had hurried or pleasure loitered; were no doorway without its sign of mourning, no figure without its garb of black; were the plough to lie idly waiting in the half-traced furrow of the deserted field, the spade to stick abandoned in the garden with mocking weeds twining round its stem, and the cattle to stare in stupid surprise should a human being pass; were the babe to be torn from its mother's breast, the sturdy and beloved young bread-winner to be snatched away from the bride of his heart and her little ones, the orphans to shiver and starve round the empty grate of the room where the corpse of their father and the corpse of their mother lie stretched together in horrible decay; were death alone to reign; yet it would be only death. Grief, indeed, terrible grief would darken the home and break the heart; it would desolate the land; it would almost annihilate the nation, yet it would be only death. Love could still linger beside the grave; love could still cherish the endearing names of the dead; love could still live in the deathless memory of a face, a voice, a presence which, with its sad, silent, ceaseless tears, would bring the balm of a tenderness that had never failed and the support of a friendship that had never been false. It would be only death. Drunkenness brings death, but not until it has first brought disunion, dislike, contempt, loathing. Drunkenness is death, but it is not only death, it is also always horror; it is also often hate. Drunkenness is the death of love before it is the death of life. The child can never remember its drunken father or its drunken mother without disgust. Yea! there is perhaps the bitter recollection of unkindness, of injustice, of insult, or the fierce

remembrance of cowardly blow, of cruel, savage, inhuman torture. Drunkenness is not only that—in life it is despair, and in death, in eternity, it is damnation.

Is there no hope, no remedy? None. There may indeed be some slight, stray hope for some stray, chance individuals; for the nation there is none.

It is possible for some persons who are victims of Drunkenness to escape. But they have to face a grim fact. Once Drunkenness has touched its prey there is no healing. Such treatment as moderation in drink, or strict, stringent limit is only a delusion to the drunkard and a mockery to his friends. There is only one remedy which is real; it is the knife; it is amputation. This cancer must be cut out or it will infallibly, inevitably, swiftly kill. Therapeutics are useless; it is only work for the surgeon. Finally, all drink must be utterly and for ever given up. The drunkard does not like this. No wonder; but let him frankly and manfully consider how things stand. Let us suppose that some accident has crushed the first finger of your right hand. Foolishly you have dallied with the danger for some days, using only simple home remedies until you now show it to the doctor. He tells you that the finger has mortified and that it must at once be cut off. You do not like this. It is an extreme inconvenience, besides being a serious disfigurement, to spend all the rest of one's lifetime with a mutilated right hand. You refuse to let the finger be amputated. Well, the doctor answers, if the finger be not cut off at once the right arm must be cut off within a few days. If that be not then done your life is doomed. What will you do? Will you forfeit the

finger or will you face death ? What can the drunkard do ? He can cut off drink and save his life, or he can play at moderation and accept his drunken doom. But it is very unpleasant. Yes, it is very unpleasant, but there is nothing else for it, it must be done. It is very annoying to have to forgo an innocent means of social enjoyment and of genial good-fellowship ; a means, moreover, as it is often, of more robust health and of more cheerful humour, a means which many men wisely use with secure and easy moderation. It is very irritating to be tied up with moral strings like a naughty child that cannot be trusted. It is exasperating to be in the position of a person who is looked at askance, known to be weak or intemperate, recognised as a black sheep. All that is accurately and painfully true. It is also always accurately and painfully true that a mortified finger must be amputated, and that drink must be sharply and for ever cut off in order to save the drunkard.

Mark, furthermore, that a drunkard is not merely one who habitually or frequently becomes through drink incapable of acting as sober people act. He is also and emphatically a drunkard who, whether from a morbid craving or from an uncontrollable custom, constantly takes more alcohol than is good for his health of body or clearness of brain or strength of character. Between all these cases there may be a difference in degree, there is none in kind. It is only a question of how far the gangrene has gone ; it may be only setting in, or it may be very near the end. However this be, the only real remedy is in the sharp, steel knife of the surgeon, or in the sharp, steel resolution of the man. Now few drunkards, whether they

be deliberate brutes or tippling triflers, are either sane enough or manly enough to submit to the knife. Some stray chance individuals will take the heroic remedy and thus secure their happiness and their honour. But most men or women who are too fond of drink will be fond of it to the end, and drink will, unless perchance some fortunate sickness or lucky accident should rescue them beforehand, bring them after a drunken life to a drunken death. Therefore did I say that for individual drunkards there is little hope, and even such little hope is rare?

Did I say that for the nation there is no hope? There is none. The enormous majority of the enormous percentage of people who take drink to excess will continue to take drink to excess. To expect such a vast multitude of men and women, who are morbid or maudlin, worthless or weak, suddenly to change their character and become high-minded, resolute, self-denying, heroic, is to expect a marvel more fanciful than most day-dreams. The thing is impossible; the hope of it absurd.

Yet, even though we may not idly dream of seeing a brighter day dawn for our poor country, may we not wisely dream of a reality which may, by our earnest, actual effort be realised in the future of the nation? Now we have no hope, but we may have not only hope but certainty of a success that shall be achieved hereafter. Save the child from drink and the future Ireland will be sober. Were all our children, boys and girls, to grow up to maturity without having ever tasted stimulants, the vast majority of them would remain for all their lifetime without the need of, as well as without the desire for, any kind of alcohol; few of them would

ever be in danger of drinking to excess. The fever would not then be in their blood. At present, as in the past, the impressionable constitution of the child has been tainted by what to it at least is no help, but poison, pure poison, and only poison. Young girls of the better class, when showing signs of delicacy, are encouraged, or even forced, by foolish mothers to take wine. Young lads are allowed to take at table whatever kind of drink may be reasonably partaken of by the old folk. Children of a poorer class are often given their share of porter, and almost always taught by the example of the grown men around them to consider drink a necessary condition of manly merriment. To these dangers is added a danger still more deadly—it is the doctor. The medical profession, at a meeting of the British Medical Association held some years ago in Dublin, condemned itself for grave and very widespread imprudence in recklessly ordering the use of stimulants to women and children. A transitory and only apparent success may by such means be sometimes attained, but at the price of permanent and fatal after-effects. Save the child! Never allow one drop of drink to pass your child's lips. When your child has reached to full reason, entreat of it, for every noble motive, by every endearing persuasion, to consecrate by solemn promise of honour and of religion its young life to total abstinence until its twenty-fifth year. Do not be satisfied with a promise that shall bind it until it come of age. The coming of age is an epoch of excitement and of independence. Let that epoch pass safely by without the risk of a first wild fit of indulgence. The young man or young woman who has

reached the calm age of twenty-five without touching stimulants may be considered safe for life. Save the child!

May we not hope that even though we do not live to see the day, yet a day may come at last when, after generations of more and more carefully guarded children, the nation will behold realised in fact our dreams of fair prosperity, when thrift and taste shall follow upon sober work and well-spent wage, when the millions of money now squandered on empty indulgence or deadly drunkenness shall fructify in solid industry and permanent advantage, when commerce with homely comfort shall traffic from sea to sea, when honour with ennobling education shall consecrate our character as well as elevate our intellect, when by the rooting out of the one and practically the only cause of all our wretchedness and of all our guilt we shall have become a nation truly great, great in material worth, great in mental culture, great in moral excellence, because most truly great in manly, masterful, majestic, magnificent self-control?

MENTAL HELL

Look in thought upon a face which would be in material line, curve, colour, tone a realisation, in human feature and expression, of the inward agony of Satan. Do not paint the picture with the rough, coarse strokes of vulgar sense-impressions, but with the finer finish of an intellectual portrait—a face of strange livid pallor, looming with ghastly glare from out of fathomless depths of darkness; above the forehead black, heavy, matted masses of hair; upon the forehead deep, sharp ruts of writhing thought. Under the straight, thick, beetling brows eyes that stare in hate and horror, mute in infinite despair, yet eloquent in fiendish evidence of a spite, bitter and malignant as wormwood of the soul, yet coldly expressive of a cynical depravity as irreconcilable in its gloomy guilt as God is glorious in His love of good; nostrils distended and palpitating in paroxysms of angry pain and excruciating passion; cheeks sunken, corded, twisted by underlying spasms into nervous rifts; lips pale, parted, quivering, while through them noiselessly and slowly oozes the froth and scum of the agony and of the rebellion, of the remorse and of the torture, of the devil.

The science of material things monopolises in our age the minds of many thinking men. Within its

own kingdom material science is so accurate in its theories, so inevitable in its proofs, and so splendid in its practical results that not merely its high priests, but even its humblest votaries, become so dominated by what they know and so exclusive in their methods of knowledge that they bring their tests and tubes, their weights and measures, their scales and their retorts into every other region of human thought or of divine wisdom. Thus even unconsciously they apply their sense-experiences to what is outside sense, or they define all else to be unknowable which cannot in this manner be known by them. Hence, although there is a torrent of thinking and a deluge of books about every possible subject, there is a dearth of understanding, and out of it all there can scarcely be gathered, outside the mere matter of material science, one single solid atom of wisdom. For instance, we are deafened by the incoherent and insolent outcries of men who, because they are absolutely ignorant of the very first and fundamental question at issue, rail against the justice of God. Now, in the first place, an unjust God is a contradiction in terms. Wherefore, as God really does exist, He cannot but be just. Justice, however, cannot mean that it is impossible for God to punish guilt as it deserves, nor does it mean that it is impossible for God to create a soul unless that soul be willing to be saved.

It is possible that a soul should exist which by its own free and deliberate choice should so sinfully rebel against God as to make it impossible for God to love it or for it to love God. It is further possible that a sinful soul should persevere in such a state of wilful wickedness. Nor is it possible, while it thus

perseveres in sinfulness, that the just God should act towards it as He would towards a soul that is good.

God cannot, indeed, create a soul unless He give it ample means wherewith to win Himself and heaven. Nor can God create a soul unless with the aim and motive of that soul's freely deserved beatitude. But if it be moreover required that God, in order to be just, should actually and inevitably ensure that every soul, whatever its own free choice might be or might not be, shall as a fact be saved, it would then be impossible for a soul really to be free or at least really to use its freedom. In other words, it is possible for a soul to be free. It is possible for a soul to misuse its freedom. It is possible for a soul to persist in sinfulness. It is possible for God to punish sin according to the measure and during the duration of such sinfulness.

Now, what in itself is possible may by God be actually brought about, or at least be allowed to be, for the power of God is co-extensive with the inherent possibility of things. Wherefore, in order to prove that God cannot in justice allow a soul to be lost, it must be first proven that free-will—real, personal, thorough, and self-decisive of its own fate—is in itself impossible.

In the second place, those who glibly set hell aside as mere silly superstition, or who flippantly blaspheme God as cruel, speak only of physical torture and of material fire. What by this they make most evident is their own ignorance. This matter does not touch the real nature of the question. The one only essential pain of hell, that one and only pain which by itself makes hell and without which there is no hell, is

the pain of loss. Pain is impossible in a soul that intuitively sees and therefore absolutely loves God, for the rapture of that vision absorbs and transfigures every faculty and power, so as to render impossible any impression not compatible with that rapture. Happiness is impossible in a soul which is finally alienated from God, for the ever-intuitive evidence and the ever-abysmal despair of an essential soul-thirst, which is without possibility of being appeased, must result in a grief so utter as to darken all brightness and sour all joy with the infinite agony of an infinite lost love.

As to the fact, it is the teaching of the Church that the lost do suffer material pain. It may be well briefly to recall the reasons which recommend this teaching even should they not prove the fact. It would seem to follow from the Resurrection of the body. The body must, indeed, feel the vibrating influence of an anguish that convulses the soul. But more than this is meant. The body must directly suffer bodily pain. Punishment should correspond to guilt. Now it was not merely the soul that sinned, it was the man who sinned. Therefore the culprit man is punished, and punished not merely in his soul, but also in his body that shared the sin. This may be set in another shape. A fundamental law of physical order and of moral right is that to every action should answer a reaction. Wherefore as to the action that is good its meet reward should correspond, and as to the action that is evil should correspond its retribution, so also in this there should be right proportion with regard to measure, kind, and character. Now in sin there is a twofold character—one is the withdrawal from God and revolt against right, the other is its wrongfully

turning towards a created aim and its wrongful misuse of what is created. To the first of these aspects of evil corresponds that reaction by which God withdraws Himself from the sinner and leaves him to the pain of loss. To the second aspect of evil corresponds the reaction of physical pain according to the character of the culprit; for pain is Nature's vengeance upon what is against Nature's law. But to man, who is made of body and of soul, this must mean both the pain of loss and the pain which is material. This question is, however, as has been said, outside our present point, nor has it any direct bearing upon the essential nature of hell. What we have to think about is the state in which a sinful soul finds itself when it reaches the final moment of its doom.

While a human soul lives its human life on earth it is indeed itself spiritual; but its spiritual substance is intermingled and immersed in matter in the actual unity of one complete substantial existence. From this it must follow that the action of the soul as well as its substance should depend upon matter, and in some ways be hindered by matter, and in other ways be by matter helped. Hence in this state the soul is intelligent in potency not in act. For actual intelligence it needs that its potency be stirred to act by an actual reverberation within its spiritual faculty consequent upon and corresponding to a determining influence which the same soul receives through the actual knowledge of some sense-faculty. When by death the soul is freed from matter all this is changed. It is now only spirit; its substance, its life, is only spiritual; its action is only spiritual; it can now no longer be hindered by matter, nor does it now further

need the help of matter. When first created the soul's intelligence was only potential, and had within itself no bud or germ of knowledge. While it lived it gathered store of ideas and harvest of thoughtfulness. This treasure, being intellectual, although derived indirectly from matter, the soul has brought within itself beyond the grave. In the first place, then, the separated soul is actually intelligent, now no longer in mere potency but in actual act. In the second place, it is actually intelligible. In the third place, its power of knowing and its possibility of being known are absolutely proportioned to each other. In the fourth place, the knowing and the knowable are not merely perfectly proportioned, they are not merely perfectly applied, they are not merely present to each other in time and space, they are not merely present to each other by actual touch and living union, they are actually present to each other, proportioned and applied, in the identity of one intellectual substance. Wherefore, by sheer necessity, with inevitable determination, with uttermost energy, with unveiled intuition, with undimmed sight, with complete and exhaustive comprehensiveness, the separated soul knows itself. Reflect upon the full bearing of this. The knowledge which such soul has of itself is not partial but complete; it is not superficial but intimate; it is not passing but permanent; it is not a deduction nor a reasoning, but an intuition and a consciousness; it does not stop short either in intensity or in extent of understanding, but in the very fullest way and to the very deepest depth it fathoms and holds and gazes upon every possible phase of what within itself is knowable. This comprehensive consciousness need

not suppose any accidental action upon the part of intellect. It is the substantial, actualised, intellectual presence of the soul to itself as it is a substantial, actualised, intellectual intelligence. It is, then, the perfect intelligent identity of knowing and of known. Furthermore, from this it follows, or rather in this is involved, that this intuitive and comprehensive consciousness is absolutely inseparable from such a soul. It is, in truth, the soul's own actualised intellectual identity with itself. Wherefore this intuitive and comprehensive consciousness can no more cease to be than a soul freed from matter can cease to be itself. Wherefore, as far at least as regards this intuitive and comprehensive self-knowledge, the soul is unchangeable ; it is in a fixed state, it is now and for evermore in one immutable moment ; it has come to a final fate ; it has reached an irremediable full-stop. Again, as this intuitive consciousness is in actual reality the very substance of the soul itself under the logical aspect of knowledge, so the same substance of the soul is the essential and unchangeable object of such knowledge under the logical aspect of its being known. Further, as this object of intuitive consciousness must have its moral kind, its spiritual character, its self-given growth in evil or in good, its acquired bent towards right or wrong, so is it a substantial decision of its own destiny identical with the soul's own substance. Hence this act which is the soul's own substance, in as far as it has been wilfully shaped, moulded, determined, fixed in a definite moral character, is also as unchangeable and as final as is the substantial state of that soul. In human life no such final state can be reached, for while

in the body the soul's substance can only be indirectly and mediately reached by accidental, and therefore changeable, acts. But when life is done, the body gone, the soul substantially conscious of itself and substantially fixed in good or in evil, the term is reached. To this a more outside reason may be added, namely, that as the soul's knowledge can neither cease in its fulness nor change in its fixedness, so neither can its will change, for will, even in this life, never changes unless through the change, whether due to the will's action or to some other cause, of the aspect under which objects are set before it. Whether this reasoning appear plain or imperfect, the truth taught by the Church is on her authority undeniable, that there is after death, for the soul, a state or term of fixedness, not another life of travel or of change.

Here we come face to face with the fundamental mistake of those who dare to question the justice of God. First of all, they ignorantly take it for granted that the soul is always in a state of transition, in an endless series of progress, in an existence that never reaches its full maturity or final perfectness. From this groundless supposition they triumphantly infer that, as in its present life, so throughout eternity, the soul may at any moment change its mind and begin its trial-time all over again. Further, they proceed to imagine a soul suffering cruel torture from which it could and would escape if it were not held fast in the pitiless clutch of a vindictive and unjust hatred. All this is utter and abject nonsense. However philosophy may explain the mode or manner of it, revelation which makes known the truths of God, but not their philosophic proof, declares in this matter

that hell is eternal and that it is only the just retribution which must, according to the right order of things, follow upon finally unrepented sin. This whole doctrine rests upon the more fundamental doctrine that whereas this life is a trial-time the next life is a state of finality where the soul reaches its last end, its uttermost term of existence. Secondly, the kind of state in which the soul shall find itself in its future life is the result of each soul's own choice. Thirdly, that choice is fixed and final. Fourthly, that final state of wilful fixedness in evil, which is the lost soul's own doing, is the reason why it cannot, will not, love God. In the last place, this wilful and final sinfulness of the lost soul is the reason why God cannot love it, and therefore it is the reason why that soul is lost. Were it possible that a soul should be willing to repent, God would at once and absolutely welcome it back to his love. But it cannot repent while it will not repent, and its will is once and for ever in that one indivisible moment of its final fixedness, wilful rebel against God.

Calmly, now, but with deep thoughtfulness, consider some definite aspects of a Mental Hell. Meditate first upon the loneliness and isolation of a lost soul. From without no message can come to it of sympathy, nor can it know that any other mind will still excuse its sin or palliate its guilt. It may indeed know that amongst those who once loved it upon earth there are some who still remember it with tenderness, and who would, if it were possible, send it at least the full, sweet, soothing comfort of their pity. But this is only added bitterness, for the lost soul realises that such pity is only born of ignorance, and would die of chill horror did it but see the lost soul as the lost soul sees

itself. Nay! no true thought can judge the lost soul's state to be other than the inevitable doom, merited in strictest justice although in actual judgment by mercy mitigated, result made unavoidable by its own wicked wilfulness; nor can any will, whether good or bad, really love the soul in which badness has vitiated all goodness, in which depravity has befouled all attractiveness, in which malice has poisoned all affection, in which cynicism has frozen all sympathy, and in which hatred has obliterated all love. From within the lost soul there uprises ever the cold, clear, evident, and inevitable verdict of its own self-condemnation. It sinks through a fathomless abyss of self-contempt; it writhes in convulsive paroxysms of self-detestation. It recoils back in horrible self-loathing, or it is hurled on by savage self-hate. No hand can help, no thought can brighten, no will can love, no heart can pity it ever more. It is alone with its own hateful and hating self. That loneliness cannot be left to the calm of gloomy silence, nor to the mournful stillness of a soul unpitied and forgot, for upon it breaks with surging tumult and with clamorous shock the inundating anguish of the past in its ever actual evidence, in its ever fresh remorse, while before it, above it, beneath it, around it, within it mercilessly glares the eternal despair of the future—blank, bare, abysmal, in its one changeless, fathomless instant. The haunting memories of what was, with the agonising memories of what might have been: how easily and how happily innocence might have been kept untarnished or lost loveliness regained; how sweetly God had called, how gently had not the Good Shepherd stooped; how often, oh! how often! had not the tender arms of a divine

mercy been folded round it with fond caress and strong support, yet how often it had struggled against grace and fought against love's sad appeal, and flung from it the tears that would have softened, the blood that would have redeemed it; these thoughts, these truths, are ever evident and ever re-echoing, while always, always, always, with each single second of time, like the sound of a clock near a death-bed, with the awful fixedness of eternity like the staring eyes of a corpse, are repeated the words: 'Too late, too late; for ever and for ever too late.'

But ponder over the innermost nature and uttermost reason of the pain of loss. A soul that has fixed itself in evil must still, by the essential bent of its being, by the fundamental kind and character of its nature, gravitate with resistless and ceaseless attraction towards the one centre of all truth, towards the one loadstone of all love. With infinite velocity it is drawn towards the light of infinite knowledge; with absolute momentum it is hurled towards the ocean of absolute good. Deep down within its spiritual potency, so deep as to be identical with its own self, there is a need of God, a want of what can be found in Him alone, a soul-thirst never to be appeased, never to be quenched, but by the fountain of living waters which alone can content the thought with truth; a hunger of the soul never to be satiated, never even to be alleviated, but by the presence of divine beauty and by the possession of divine love. Hence, there is a yearning terrible in its intensity, a craving absorbing in its exclusiveness, a desire utter, absolute, desperate, unflinching, unfailing, irreconcilable in its one demand; the soul must have God or it is hopelessly damned.

On the other hand, the lost soul has so warped its own being, it has so vitiated its own nature, it has so poisoned its own spiritual character with aims ignoble and impulses that are foul, it has so inflamed its powers with pestilential fever, that the cool, fresh drops must vanish in hot unreality upon the burning lips of its diseased desire ; nor can it taste the pure, sweet good which it had loved in health but which now its sickened appetite must loathe and vomit. It cannot appreciate the truth it knows ; it cannot love the God whom its nature needs, but from whom its sinfulness recoils in horrified strangeness and in unnatural but ingrained detestation.

All this is not only real in fact, it is absolutely realised in intuitive consciousness. As the soul sees itself with such searching understanding, with such comprehensive completeness that there is within itself nothing knowable which is not known, so it sees in its own essential kind, in its own inmost nature, an image clear, distinct, evident of what the great God is who made it. It is a mirror, however marred or blemished in its self-given deformity, yet still transparently truthful in its God-given nature, reflecting with pure precision and with spiritual splendour the ideal glory and the absolute grace of the good, great, beautiful Artist who fashioned it unto His own likeness. That dream, that ideal, that vision, created indeed but transcendently perfect, can never fail or fade. It calls forth an eagerness, a yearning, a desire corresponding to the vigour and intensity of the soul's own soul-need and soul-quest, only to be flung back in writhing self-torture, in weird self-severance of its living spirit, by the agonising experience of its

being wrenched asunder between its essential tendency, its innate want and its acquired bent, its ingrained distortion, its wilful malignity, its final and fixed sin. It is the agony of a lost love. It is a heart-break always actual, always new. But to assuage the poignancy of its grief or the fierceness of its regret no comfort can ever come with the balm of happy memories nor with the distant dawn of hope; nay! nor can it even look beyond the havoc of its life and the horror of its loss to the stillness and silence of the grave. It has no past but remorse; it has no future but despair; its one everlasting instant has the freshness of the first touch of agony and the fixedness of the final seal of doom; it is lost, and its loss is its own making, its own choice, its own holding, its own Mental Hell.

While you meditate look again upon the face of Satan. That strange, cold, cynical stare grows upon you with more and more vivid fascination. It seizes upon you with weird spell, holding you powerless, horror-struck with the revelation of its diabolical hatred and with the exultant expression of its approaching triumph, until you can only look into those eyes which glare through and through your very soul. With thirsting ferocity, with leering cunning, with mocking contempt, with uttermost endless rage, so pitiless as to be like ice yet so eager as to be like flame, those eyes glare in a flash of infatuating magic until their influence seems to paralyse your thought with the chill slime of the serpent, and to crush your will with serpent-fold, and to poison your heart with the sting of the venom of Satan, so that your mind is bewildered with doubt or distraught

with denial, your will savage with fury or frenzied with sin, your heart rotting with filth or writhing with pain, until you too seem to think and to feel like Satan; until you seem to yourself to be lost.

Yet at the moment hear a loud cry piercing the gloom with a glory of light, shaking the dead with a message of hope, uplifting the earth with the touch of its Maker, opening the heavens with the voice of their God! At that cry Satan has vanished. Hear it re-echo the agony of your loss with the promise of its love. 'My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?' It is the dereliction of the Christ. It is the nearest anguish to the pain of loss that can come upon a soul. It is a human foretaste of the bitterness of its despair, by which your loving Saviour in tears and blood upon His Cross ransomed you from Mental Hell. Draw near! Draw near! Cling to the Cross! He has dearly loved you. He has kept you safe till now. Sure, sure, He will keep you safe till then. O gentle Christ! I draw near to Thee in Thy dereliction, in that mysterious terror of Thy despair. For me Thou didst endure it all. I trust Thee in life, in death, for time, for eternity; O gentle Christ, I trust Thee!

THE APPARITION OF A SKULL

For dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.—Gen. iii. 19

As in the still dark night you lie wakeful, your body resting with healthful ease but your mind alert with clear, calm musings, let your thought pass, as it may wisely pass, beyond those few short years that yet remain before you die, to linger near your own grave and to look upon your own skull. What will one day be an actual fact is reflected into each present moment of your life as an actual truth. Now it is true that you will then be dead. Soon, very soon that day will come. When you look back upon the days that are dead, how swiftly those many years appear to have vanished! As we advance in age time flies more swiftly. However far that fact may seem to be on your distant horizon, it is coming near with appalling suddenness. Soon, it will then seem horribly soon, your soul shall have been breathed forth; from about your bones your flesh shall all have crumbled. There shall be only empty, sightless sockets; gaunt, hollow cheek-bones; and ghastly, lifeless, grinning teeth upon your skull. In the strange, weird, supernatural light see your own skull straight before you. Listen to its silent lesson; behold the warning of its vision. It is a ghastly sight that makes your flesh creep, your nerves shudder, and your heart

quail; but even though your teeth should chatter with terror, your very bones quake with panic, and your mind recoil in dismay, remember that it is a fact. 'Remember, man, Thou art but dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.'

A brave man may fearlessly face death upon the battlefield. A good man may calmly wait for his last moment on earth while his life is fast failing under the icy touch of the sickness that is changing his body into a corpse. A death may be a happy one, gentle, untroubled, brightened by its trust in the welcome of Christ and consoled by the loving good-bye of the loves that shall accompany it into eternity. That may indeed be so when the vividness of divine faith illumines all human thought and when the strength of divine hope steadies all human fear. Or a man may be so overmastered by an absorbing motive, or so carried away by an impetuous passion, or so dulled by insensibility, that he thinks not of death's meaning. Still death is terrible not merely to the sinful who shrink back from judgment, not merely to the worldly minded who cling with agonising despair to the joys that must end in the grave, but death is terrible to the mortal man who looks on it with mortal eyes and touches it with mortal heart. Death is a sundering of life in twain, and from this nature must shrink. Death is a changing of the living body with its sight, its hearing, its feeling, its warmth, its movement, into cold, blind, senseless, inert clay, so that all which men could know becomes mere dry dust. Death is a passing forth of the breathing spirit with its power of interchanging thought, of giving or receiving affection, of taking a share in the

lives of others, so that it is now and for ever effaced utterly from the earth ; it is now and for ever nothing more than a memory ; it is now and for ever hopelessly, absolutely gone. Death is a leaving of all that we understand or are accustomed to. Death is an entering upon an unknown existence ; an awakening into an unknown world ; a beginning of an unknown hereafter. All have gone forth and have been lost in the mysterious gloom which shrouds the soul whose body is shrouded in clay. All have gone and no one has come back but God. Christ's Resurrection has thrown a glory round the tomb ; it has transformed death into slumber. But to nature that slumber is still death. To nature death, even though it should be welcome as the ending of this life of tears, is yet fraught with an uneasy fear, a vague dread, a bewildering sense of mysterious strangeness and of unknowable doom To the brave as to the timid, to the wise as to the foolish, to the noble as to the selfish, to the good as to the bad, death, if it be truly, deeply thought upon, brings a warning of solemn dread, an overmastering impression of awe. To nature death is terrible.

Yet it were folly not to face the truth of death. It is in one way the greatest fact of life ; for within its fateful meaning is held the answer as to whether or no life be really worth the living, and upon its awful doom depends whether or no that life has been lost. Wherefore frankly face the actual truth of that future fact, and look in thought upon your own dead skull. Gaze into those empty sockets, and from them understand life's blindness and death's truth. Read the haunting lesson of those empty sockets which stare

with piercing repudiation of your folly and with glaring evidence of the truth you denied. Oh! the wild, wild folly of living for life instead of living for death! Life is gone; it has vanished like vapour; it has passed away like the breeze; it has relapsed into empty nothingness; but its result remains in the triumph of death. Those eyeless holes, once filled with the tender tearfulness, the fierce fire, the eagerness, or the wonder of your sight, show to you with startling clearness what plain but solemn facts you ignored, what simple but overmastering principles you evaded, what undeniable duties you distorted into false issues, what inspirations of wisdom or of honour you sneered at, what impulses towards selfish gain or brutal greed you cherished. When you were living you jauntily persuaded yourself that you had commonsense. Now that you are dead the glitter of fancy and the glamour of folly disappear before the spectral gaze of your sightless sockets. If while you sat at table, while you felt the exuberant exultation of health; if while the ruddiness of the rose was upon your lip, the softness of the peach upon your cheek, the sunlight in your eye; if while your loud laugh had reverberated in full-toned merriment, suddenly the chill touch of death's spasm should grip your heart with pain and horror, would not the whole scene become at once changed for you? Would not your views of life, your opinions, your purpose become quite other when death stared you in the face? What would then be true is now true. What will be true of your life when you are dead is now true of your life while you are living. Look into those sightless sockets. They see what perhaps you will not now see; they see and reflect the

truth. Look and learn. Understand life's blindness and death's truth. Alone with your skull, meditate upon what was and upon what might have been. Your life is ended now, and alas ! what did you make of it ? You realise now the worth of your lost opportunities. What power you once had ! What inborn promise ! Whatever your circumstances may have been, there was open before you a path in life lit by clear reason and perhaps illumined by clear revelation. You had your life in your own hand, not indeed as to its outside surroundings nor as to its spot on earth, its place in social existence, its ownership of gold or its chances of success, nor yet as to its health or beauty, its talent or its gifts ; but you had your life in your own hand as to its being made the life of a true man through the living evolution of his noble self under the creative action of his own choice. Pain ? You might have borne it with the courage that is tempered by fire and toned by chill. Misfortune, failure, poverty, ruin ? You might have met them all with the patience of a true philosopher, with the serene consciousness that no ills of earth can subdue your spirit or crush your resolution. The good-bye at the grave of your friend, or the treachery that broke your heart ? You might have remembered that 'love is strong as death' and that true love is never lost, for love is the name of God. Sin ? You might have bent low like the Magdalen to let your tears fall upon the feet of Jesus, or you might have bravely and trustingly stood under the Cross near the loving Mother of your loving Christ. You might have done all this. You might have been not only good but great, not only patient but magnificent, not only true but noble,

not only manly but heroic. You might have been, but now that you are dead you can only bewail your lost opportunities. That skull is staring at you. Cannot you now learn to understand life's blindness and death's truth ?

Meditate upon the lesson of those bare cheek-bones, that brainless skull. Once round about those bones was stretched the living vigour of human health. With gathered growth or ebbing change, with fresh-drawn draught of blood, with fresh-bred germ of tissue, with fresh-born call of vital potency, muscle, sinew, nerve, flesh were interwoven by strange choice and deft craft, were clad about with skin, soft as silk and tender, yet strong in ceaseless evolution of new fibre, into the mystery of life. It was strong. Within its power were hid countless, measureless possibilities of outpouring energy and of triumphant work. But the labour of that life is done, and there is left of it all only these bare bones. What did you make of it ? What did you do ? What have you got to show as resultant gain of the honest traffic of your talents ? Has the work of your life been worthless ? Has the labour of your life been spent in building up a ruin ? Again, that bloom of life, that beauty, what of it ? Once the ruddiness of healthful youth, its comely grace, its winsome charm, or the mature majesty of manhood or womanhood's refined loveliness made that life a divine thing in the midst of the lesser creation. It was only used as a toy wherewith to trifle or as an allurement wherewith to sin. It is all gone now ; it is all now lost or it only remains in the result of its mortal putrefaction and perhaps of its immortal punishment. The labour of life and the bloom of life are now no

more. There are only left your bare and hollow cheek-bones.

In that empty skull there once was a brain. That brain may have been stored with knowledge. Thought may have illumined its life, and lifted it up to be the material partner of its spiritual power and the material treasury of its spiritual gains. It may have been enabled to travel beyond the horizon of time and space. It may have penetrated into the infinitesimal recesses of the atoms to surprise the secret of their action, or it may have measured the mass of distant suns and listened to the music of their movement. It may, within its tiny cells, have amassed in accurate order the maps of nations and the histories of the ages. It may have given birth to bewitching forms of loveliness in art, or to dazzling inventions of science, or to giant-like schemes of wealth in peace or of prowess in war. But were it the brain of a Shakespeare or of a Newton, of an Aristotle or of a Napoleon ; were it the brain of a Hodge or of an idiot, it has crumbled into dust long ago, and that dust is like any other dust, flying before the wind when dry and sticking into mud when wet. The dust has crumbled out of it or has been eaten by the worms. You have only got an empty shell. Knock on it with your knuckles. It rattles like any other empty old shell.

Put that skull straight and close before you. Watch that silent, ceaseless grin. With leering fixedness it holds your eye and fascinates your fancy. It seems to laugh with uncanny glee, but there is no sound, only a horrible silence which makes you almost wish that it would speak. In a wizard way it does speak, for it is grinning at you in contemptuous

mockery. Yes! it is mocking you! Listen to the silent scorn of that unearthly chuckle. Pleasure? Ha! Ha! Ha! The pleasure of the tiger or of the sloth, of the serpent or of the swine! While the orgie lasted you were a lunatic or a beast. When the orgie was over you were shamed, befouled, palsied, crushed. Was that pleasant? Is it pleasant now to remember what a fool or a sneak or a coward or an animal you were? Pleasure! Bah! Look! the skull is grinning at you!

There is no soil now upon that skull. The worms have made it clean of all its fleshy sin and guilty filth. They have polished it and made it shine as though it had never been defiled with crime. The moral corruption of life has ended in the physical corruption of death, and both have been washed away by the ruthless yet innocent elements of the earth or eaten by the greedy yet sinless scavengers that creep or burrow beneath the clay. You need not fear to touch it or take it in your hand, because even though there should be a little dust on it that does not belong to it, you can brush that away as the other dust which once belonged to it has been all removed, so that your skull is now quite nice, quite smooth, quite clean.

The ghosts of dead pleasures rise up to haunt your uneasy soul. See those grinning ghosts in countless numbers crowding round about you. Hear in that unearthly and unbroken silence those skeleton skulls repeating mockingly with weird warning but without human word: 'Remember, man, thou art but dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.' In multitudes they are thronging nearer and nearer, in mockery they are

leering with more and more scornful stare, with more and more contemptuous grin ; in silent horror they are echoing, with the rapid succession of the instants of time, with the motionless stillness of eternity: 'Remember, man, thou art but dust, and unto dust thou shalt return.' Would it not be wise to live now as though you had died on that quiet wakeful night when you saw the apparition of your skull and in the morning your life had been given back to you that you might live it over again ?

'MISERERE'

Miserere.—Ps. 50

MISERERE! Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy Were even I—hard, selfish, callous though I be—to meet upon the roadway some poor wounded creature, maimed, crushed, quivering, blind, I should have pity on it. Pity! Have pity on me, O God, for I am such! For thick shadows of the night have shrouded all my soul till 'I have groped at noonday as in darkness.' 'I have walked rugged paths' till that which I had feared hath come upon me. The vigour of my will writhes helplessly beneath quick, sharp blows of failure. My panting hopes are parched with bitter thirst. My very blood burns with fever poison, while through my agonising heart keen, cruel disappointments pierce like steel, and from it flow in thick clots of festering horror sick, swollen currents of corrupted love. Pity, O God, I need Thy pity! Nay! more than pity, I need mercy. I do not deserve Thy pity. The wounded dog whose life-blood gathers into muddy pool the roadway's dust, whose wild, shrill, piercing cries soften to pity even the passing stranger's heart, has merited no blame. Its sufferings are the result of physical fate, not the just doom of moral fault. It knows no better than to serve its instincts, nor can it wield its will unto the choice of nobler

good. But, O God, my blindness is of mine own making, my wounds are of mine own fault, my sores are sins, my misery is moral, my pain is just punishment, mine anguish is mine own desert! Therefore do I need a pity more divine, a pity undeserved. Therefore do I need mercy. Men sometimes have great mercy, men whose character is noble enough to be gentle and whose heart is big enough to be kind. Yet I need a greater mercy than the mercy even of great men. Therefore do I turn to Thee, O Great God of Mercy! The mercy of man is measured; Thine is immeasurable. Yea! have mercy on me according to Thy great mercy. No ordinary mercy is enough for me. Let Thy high justice stand aside; let all Thine attributes of order, power, providence, waive their prerogatives before the pleading pardon of Thy greatest glory; let mercy only and alone, let Thy great mercy, free from all other influence however holy, unfettered by any law but that of infinite forgiveness, pass her sweet sentence on me a sinner. 'Thou knowest the clay of which I am formed.' Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy! Miserere!

'According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies' have mercy on me. The kindest men at last grow weary of ingratitude. Time after time they may forgive, but in the end faults against friendship dry up the very sap of friendship within the human heart whose roots are deepest and whose devotedness is most staunch. But where men stop short Thy mercy can still prevail. Again and again have I wronged Thy friendship by wicked fault and evil insult. Hosts of sin rise up before my memory like the weird shapes and ghastly phantoms that haunt doomed places

Mine iniquities are multiplied above the sands of the sea. Again and again have I sinned. Yet again and again hath Thy great mercy forgiven me. Aye! Thy forgiveness each time hath come to me with a freshness of pity and with a fulness of pardon as though never I had been pitied or pardoned before. Tenderly hath Thy mercy stooped towards me. Time after time, again and again, freshly, fully, endlessly, the multitude of Thy tender mercies hath brought me forgiveness. Therefore, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out mine iniquity. Iniquity! Yes! Not mere unbecomingness, not mere disorder, not mere foolishness, not mere waywardness, but real fault, downright wrong, absolute iniquity. Yes, iniquity; revolt against Thy power, rejection of Thine authority, disobedience to Thy law, insult against Thy majesty, outrage against Thine honour, denial against Thy wisdom, ingratitude against Thy goodness, meanness against Thy providence, treachery against Thy friendship. Blot it all out, O God! It is not enough that Thou shouldst merely cover or ignore, forget or overlook my sinfulness; it is not enough for me that I should still be stained by sin even though forgiven; it is not enough for Thee that Thy forgiveness should fail to efface the fault forgiven. Take it away; remove it; efface it; annihilate it; blot out all mine iniquity. Miserere!

Wash me yet more from mine iniquity. The sense of sin abides within my feelings still. The state of sinfulness has in it such deep penetrating evil that I can scarcely understand, nor can I at all realise as yet the divine change which Thou, O God, hast wrought within my soul. The dust of constant evil had

gathered and settled and become ingrained in soil and stain, my life had been steeped, soaked in mouldering mildew or in rotting damp of wilful fault or wilful feebleness until sin seemed to have absorbed into itself what once had been my soul. Therefore do I cry to Thee, my God, wash me yet more. Not as when man forgives but leaves the fault. Thine omnipotence, Thy creative pardon, effaces what it has forgiven. The fact indeed is true that there was fault, but the fault which is forgiven is now real no more. No trace, no mark, no scar, no stain, no slightest sign is left to show where sin had been. Thy grace is creative of spiritual health, vigour, splendour, beauty, glory. Therefore let Thy bright, clear grace in inundating cataracts of life-giving sunshine flood my soul with purifying heat and thrilling blessing. Let loose the pure sweet springs that sparkle forth into draughts of life-eternal; wash from me all that sad soil, that mire, that slightest dust of mine iniquity. Wash me yet more, yet more. O glorious sunshine, bathe my inmost thought with happy wave and rippling glory till it like purest crystal reflect Thy light, Thy loveliness! O sweet clear fountains of my great God's forgiveness, wash me yet more from mine iniquity! From my sin cleanse me, O Lord! All else that is upon this earth may serve some use and in its own way be admirable. In the order of immaterial things, where there is no sin, there can be no stain, no soil. Even in the lowly world of matter there is nothing base or foul which may not enrich the earth with the loosened atoms of its simple elements or feed the roots of tree or flower with the sap and beauty that are born of its death. But sin is always foul and only foul,

always filth and only filth. Always within it there is the loathsomeness of putrid horrors, and always from it there arise before the face of the fair heavens the abominations of its stench.

'For I now know mine iniquity.' Humbly I admit it; sadly I confess it; in bitter earnest I acknowledge it. The wild strange phase of wilful ignorance has passed. The frenzy of fever impulse has been subdued, and through the thick shadows of a mind poisoned with evil exhalations there has dawned a serene atmosphere of truth. In the return to good sense after the delirium of sin, the appalling facts of evil done and the ghastly ruins of good stand in silent, stern, inexorable condemnation. I recognise it all now. I recognise it with bitter but unavailing regret. I understand it now. Alas, alas! 'My sin is ever against me!' That haunting horror is ever before me. In fierce remorse or hopeless grief it comes from out its troubled grave. It will not rest. When I had thought it had been buried, see! it is again there before me, against me. The harm is done, how can it be undone? What power can stretch back into the past to appease the implacable ghosts of the sins that are buried but are not dead? What a different life mine might have been! How might it not have bloomed to spiritual beauty and grown to masterful character! That is all over now. It is a lost life upon which has fallen the weird and woeful curse of sin. 'For my sin is ever against me.' Even when my thought turns towards the future I find myself confronted by my sin. In the unreal world it seems real. From out of the dim recesses of years unborn it looms with mocking menace and toad-like touch to poison,

chill, and paralyse the warm vigour of my hope. For those natural habits which have become ingrained, that actual character which has grown into mine own self, that self which sin has made me, this image mirrored from the future, haunts me with antagonistic spell. Everywhere and always my sin stands against me. Nowhere, never can I escape. Therefore do I cry to Thee, omnipotent and eternal God, Who art outside all space and beyond all time, praying that Thou wouldst put Thy mercy forth to blot out my sin. Miserere!

'Against Thee only have I sinned.' Many a wrong may I have done against my fellow-man; much, indeed, I may have injured others by bitter or proud offence, by evil deed of selfishness or cruel work of heartless hate, but in all this I have only outraged the right order which is human. Yet beneath all this and above all this there is an order which is divine. In this order of right which is divine Thou only art the test of truth, the balance of justice, and the standard of worth. In this order only is there sin, for sin is no mere crime against a creature, it is insult, wrong, rebellion against God. Such evil against absolute order, against supreme right, against Thine infinite Majesty is irremediable to created power, eternal to created choice, and to created atonement transcendent, immeasurable, limitless. This divine order I have also outraged. Against Thee only have I done an evil that is infinite; against Thee only have I sinned. 'Thus I have done evil in Thy sight,' against Thy very throne have I uprisen in unabashed and blunt defiance. In Thy very presence I have broken the divine dictates of Thy law; I have flung insult in

Thy very face. Such evil I can never of myself repair. For such sin I cannot by myself atone. My repentance is no adequate plea for pardon. My sorrow has no claim on justice. Therefore do I cry for mercy. Miserere!

'That Thou mayest be justified in Thy words.' Thus art Thou shown to have been in Thy warnings always wise and in Thy judgments always just. Thy all holy will guided by Thine absolute truth and governing through Thine unerring providence is, by the gradual unfolding of Thy plan, through the harmonious outcome of Thine actual action, made manifest to be without reproach in justice as it is above cavil in goodness, so that Thou dost triumph even when Thy working is scrutinised by our mere human reason. Thus we recognise that Thou dost overcome by the victorious reaction of good against evil, in the warring down by justice of unrepented sin, or in the effacing by mercy of the sin for which we sorrow. Then may Thy mercy triumph in my soul.

'For behold I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me.' I have strong claim upon Thy pity. Even before the light of reason had dawned upon my soul original sin had cast its shadow there, for this is the meaning which Thy great saints, Jerome and Augustine, teach me to gather from Thy prophet's words. Thus all the grace and glory of Thy first creation, its strong mastery of mind over the material faculties of its prison clay, its spiritual loveliness and its God-given charm had been lost, and there was left a weak nature destined to divine excellence, yet starving for truth; thirsting with a divine want, yet with a will unable of itself to totter towards

its own worth. Therefore do I need that Thy divine mercy should give me a divine light and a divine strength that I may walk securely towards the bourne which Thou commandest me to reach. More than this; not only hath sin seized upon man before his birth, but even after that a saving grace has purified his soul; 'The way of man is evil from his youth.' What terrible ruin of innocence, what weird havoc of holiness, do we not behold amongst the children of men, the freshness and fragrance of whose early days is so soon blighted by the gloom and corrupted by the guilt of the very blood that feeds their life. Oh! the mysterious horror of hereditary sin! The gathered guilt of generations is poured into the veins of the babe. The soul without God's grace tends to become a stagnant swamp of seething sinfulness that grows with years of weeping summers and wintry snow to burst at last in devastating deluge of iniquity. Thou, O God, art just. Thou wilt not judge the blind as though he had clear vision. Thou wilt not weigh the deeds of the feeble and sick soul in a balance only suited for the heroism of the strong. When the sad child of sin was brought before Thy judgment, Thou didst ask when her accusers had fled from thy accusing glance, 'Doth no man condemn Thee?' When she did answer, 'No one, Lord,' then Thou didst pronounce Thy judgment: 'Neither will I condemn.' Wherefore, O great just God! Thou dost accept the balance of our human justice, nor will Thy vengeance push down the scales when man's justice would pronounce the culprit free. Still more, still more! Thy most merciful justice is too just for me. Lo! I am a sinner. I dare not stand before the tribunal

where Thy most gentle justice sits. I fly to the bar where mercy alone is judge. Miserere! 'For behold, Thou hast loved truth.' It is not that I seek to palliate, by mere excuse of heedlessness, the dread responsibility and real guilt of sin, nor under petulant pretence of natural impulse or inherent passion do I seek to shirk the plain fact of my own or others culpability. No, it is true that 'I have sinned before heaven and against Thee.' But it is also true that what of itself is sinful and outwardly appears as sin before the eyes of men is yet by Thee, 'Who knowest the clay of which we are formed,' known to be often the result of a want in the fulness of our knowledge or of a weakness in the freedom of our will. This therefore is my true plea for mercy, and 'behold, Thou hast loved truth.' 'The secret and hidden things of Thy wisdom Thou hast made manifest unto me.' In this, O hidden God, Thy ways are strange! There is not merely doubt but often darkness in human life. Evil appears to triumph throughout the physical world in the withering of all that is beautiful, in the wasting away of all that is strong, and in the death of all that is living. Sin in the moral world appears to reign supreme. Yet in the physical world, while the units perish the universe is untouched; the failing, the effacement, and the death become the bud of a new beauty, the sap of a new strength, and the breathing of a new life. So too in the moral world, 'virtue is made perfect in infirmity.' Simple means, like tiny threads, woven into warp and woof of joy and grief, of health or sickness, of hope or failure, of good or fault, of sanctity or sin, gradually grow under the artist's touch into one wide web of dazzling and

unexpected success. When with honest mind we look forth on life, understanding what is plain and near, understanding much more how very much is dark and how very much is hid, yet holding with firm faith that, as the universe is not a myth, so God must be a fact; and with unquestioning trust, relying on our Father's Word, we come at last to see that what at first was mystery, faint or far or fearful, is a simple proof of an infinite power.

'Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed.' The thought ever present in the mind will again and again break forth into expression. Through all the varying wavelets of the melody, through all the tangled yet tuneful mazes of harmonious tones, there is the underlying influence and recurring accent of the keynote that dominates the whole. So do we hear ever and again the master chord of David's song of sorrow. Then is the sad sense of sin, the piteous cry for mercy, the ceaseless echo of the ceaseless yearning to feel that one is forgiven. 'Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop.' With bunch of hyssop, in sacrificial right, Jehovah's priest cast cleansing drops upon the infected body of the leper. Disinfect me, O Lord; from the infection of this fever, from the contagion of this pestilence, from the contamination of this leprosy, from the foulness of this sin, cleanse me, O Lord!

'Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow.' Let loose the flood-gates of Thy mercy, let the full, free tide of Thy most tender mercies pour its pure glad waters over my sad, sick soul, washing from it all soil of earth till it be white as the snow of heaven. When the earth is covered with its white

robe and when every tiny branch of the tree is garlanded with chaste wreaths of frozen dew-drops we behold an emblem of innocence; and when after a dark, cold, cheerless day the scene is lit with a ray of sundown we may reflect how, after a drear period of dearth and of despair, a garment of innocence may be divinely spread over a life of clay and brightened before its night with a forgiving smile from heaven.

'To my hearing Thou shalt give gladness and joy.' The sounds of Nature take their tone from feeling and bring back to our outward sense the echoes of our inward soul. Like the distant bells that ring out on a quiet Sabbath morning happy cadences of home, so will all the voices of Nature with waves of spiritual melody lull me into a heart rest, deep and tranquil, in assured hope of heaven, yet thrilling with radiant rapture and laughing song of earth's unclouded joy. 'And the bones that were humbled will rejoice.' When the rain is over and gone the flowers that had drooped their fair heads under the heavy wet lift up their faces again to breathe forth fresh fragrance in the smile of the sun, while the green grass that had been bent and downtrodden lifts up its bright blades again. My spirit hath been broken, my very bones seem crushed. Upon my humbled heart a deep depression has settled, a vague sense of tears, the mourning of an unknown woe that yet breaks with weeping waves against the soul, like the sea that wails in a starless night on the sands of a desolate shore. But, like health after sickness, with its sense of exultant vigour, or like a clear spring morning after a night of storm, my soul is lifted up to newer life and exults, my God, in Thee.

'Turn away Thy face from my sins.' An uneasy dread still haunts the forgiven soul when its thought turns towards the sinful past. A jealous fear lest the remembrance even of buried wrong should still arouse the indignant sense of justice even when the fault has been condoned. Wherefore it is not enough that my sin has been forgiven, it must be forgot. Forgive, O God, and oh! forget my sin; turn away Thy face. Look upon it now no more, nor yet for evermore. Turn away Thy face; for what Thou dost not see is truly blotted out, and it is real no more. 'Blot out all mine iniquities.' Blot out this one and then that other. Blot out each one in all that almost endless catalogue of guilt. Let not one remain. Them all, them all; blot out them all.

'Create within me a new heart.' No change within my very being can be enough. It is not change I need. I need a new creation. Once at Thy Word, from out of the infinite void, light sparkled forth. Thus, O God, from the infinite abyss of my dark guilt must Thou, O God, call forth a heart that is clean. The old one is rotten. 'Renew within me a right spirit.' Cancer has eaten to my very bones and poisoned all my blood.

'Cast me not off, O God!' Unless Thy creative power call forth a new spirit within my life I am undone, I am cast off. 'Cast me not away from Thy face.' I cling to Thee, my God, my hope, my help, my very life. With every force and faculty I cling to Thee. Towards Thee my nature gravitates. My will now holds Thee. Do not reject, spurn, nor cast away my soul. Fling me not from Thee, therefore create me afresh. 'Take not Thy holy spirit from me.'

Thou art the spirit of life, of love, of light. Without Thee the earth is without a sun; heaven without Thee is without hope.

'Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation.' Give me back, give me back those happy days of early innocence, the first fresh fragrance of childhood's years, when every inclination to outward effort was prompt, pleasant, pure. Like the first fine day of opening spring, when the breath of the breeze is fragrant with rapture, when all the sights of Nature are radiant with ecstatic sunshine and all its sounds resonant with happy hope, so may my soul recover from its winter-time to revel in the joy of my fresh found salvation. 'Therefore strengthen me, O Lord, with Thy perfect spirit.' Strengthen me with that gift which of all Thy gifts is first, chief, and fundamental. Strengthen me with that early gift with which Thy first providence did bless me, nor let me fall to lower paths which though safe would lead me to less noble life. Give me back the early joy, the early gift, the early strength, the early spirit, that the past may be only dead in what was weak or wild, but renewed in a divine resurrection of all that was happy and good.

'I will teach the unjust Thy ways, and the wicked shall be converted unto Thee.' Gratitude kindles zeal. The exultant sense of being forgiven arouses an earnest eagerness to make some return for the great and tender mercies that have been received. A bright enthusiastic courage nerves the soul that has been made clean from sin to such devoted efforts as cannot fail to be triumphant in working out the work of God. No obstacle can withstand the soul whose whole-hearted

zeal is purified, blest, consecrated by the omnipotence of grace.

'Deliver me from sins of blood, O God, Thou God of my salvation.' When David bewailed his sin and cried to Thee, O God, for mercy, his tears fell upon his blood-stained hands. He was guilty of murder. Thus, too, when one soul brings another soul to spiritual death it is guilty of the murder of the soul. David was king and upon him rested the heaven sent responsibility of protecting the lives of the flock of whom he was the shepherd. Yet he slew the man to save whose life he should have given his own blood. Thus, again, should one holding an office that brings with it a divine duty to save souls forswear that sacred calling, betray that sacred trust, and bring damnation where he should bring heaven, that man is guilty of a crime that calls aloud, with more than the terrible appeal of wanton murder, to God for vengeance. Yet no sin can be so endless in evil as God is infinite in good. Mercy forgave even David's murder. 'Have mercy, O God, and my tongue shall extol thy justice.' Thy mercy is so omnipotent that when it stoops to the repentant sinner it makes him just even in Thy sight, O God, so that Thy very pardon is changed into the acquittal of justice.

'Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise.' Bid Thou me speak, O Lord; I dare not uncalled take upon myself to speak Thy words or bear Thy message. Nay rather, as Jeremiah stammeringly protested his unfitness to be Thy prophet, so incomparably with greater need and greater justice should I draw back from so sublime an office. Yet Thou, O Lord, didst bid Jeremiah take

courage from Thy command and utter the words which Thou didst put upon his lips and in his heart. Thou who didst reveal Thy secrets through the eloquence of Isaiah, through the poetry of Job, and through the songs of David didst even deign to teach Thy lessons to Balaam through his dumb brute. 'Open Thou my lips, O Lord, and my tongue shall announce Thy praise.' 'For if Thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would surely have given it; with whole-burnt offerings Thou wilt not be delighted.' Even a sinner, if he be not quite senseless, would willingly from his earthly goods make a peace-offering in atonement. But Thou, O God, art not to be bought off. Our gifts are useless unto Thee. Even the sacrifices of old had no real worth. Their only merit was in that they foreshadowed a perfect sacrifice that was to come. Thou, O Lord, the supreme Guardian of justice, canst not allow the sinner to remain rebel against right. Therefore dost Thou, by the very need and nature of Thine own infinite sanctity, exact from the sinner true sorrow for his sin and humble recognition of his guilt. Therefore Thou wilt have his heart or nothing.

'A sacrifice unto God is a troubled spirit: a contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.' But by humble sorrow Thy justice is disarmed. Thy mercy cannot but stoop to pardon, when the heart in real repentance bows before Thine infinite holiness. Take Thou my heart, O great, strong God, and to Thy endless mercies add this greatest mercy of them all, that Thou wilt touch my heart to tears of childlike regret for what was wrong, that so I may regain Thy love. 'Deal favourably, O Lord, in Thy good will, with

Zion: that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up.' Of old the people were smitten for the crime of their king. Therefore did the repentant David pray for mercy upon the holy city Zion. Alas, alas! how often the sins of those who hold authority bring sorrow to the home or to the nation! Forgive, O Lord, all word or deed by which I may have brought evil upon those whom I should have guarded with holy and devoted love! Thus build up again the stately shrine within my soul wherein Thy holy spirit may worthily dwell. Build up again, O Lord, in the full proportions of its majestic usefulness and in the full finish of its saintly beauty that Church which is the temple of Thy truth, the sanctuary of Thy law, and the treasure store of Thy gifts.

'Then shalt Thou accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations and whole burnt-offerings; then shall they lay calves upon Thine altar.' Then, O Lord, shall there be placed upon Thine altar an offering worthy even of Thine own infinite self, Thy very Son, Thine own equal in His divine dignity; our equal, our friend, our brother in His human-hearted mercy. Again, again, out of the depths do I cry to Thee. Hear, O Lord, the cry of the heart of the sinner! 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.' Have mercy, O God, have mercy! Miserere!

THE BROKEN PILLAR OR THE CROSS

A MEDITATION ON DEATH

THERE are graveyards near every town and close by almost every village ; there are splendid cemeteries for the wealthy and there are churchyards near old ruins where are buried the poor ; there are fields where rot dead worldlings and there are consecrated grounds where sleep the just. Many as are the signs which mark tombs, there is one which expresses the resignation and the hope of Christian faith : it is the Cross. There is another sign to be met with, less often, thank God, in our own land than in lands where civilised paganism rules. It is a pillar which stands upright, but its column is broken across and only the base with its mutilated shaft remains. It means that as the pillar is broken so has death broken for ever the hope that lies buried there, the happiness of those who mourn.

The Cross is the token of death, but of a death that does not last. It is the sign of suffering that changes into joy, of sacrifice that is blessed, of hope that is shadowed but sure, of weakness that is born again to strength ; it is the mark of victory through death over death, of triumph through suffering over all pain, of peace eternal won by peace in hardship.

The Cross is the sign of all that is noble and great and true and happy, won by the willing offering of outstretched hands and open heart, giving precious blood and precious love to win by kindness, to conquer by faith, and through death to live with God.

Death is either the end or the beginning of life. The broken pillar is a fitting type of the worldling's death, for it is the end of their life. The worldling's life was one of pleasure—of pleasure that was giddy, thoughtless, unrestrained. As long as the glare of worldly fancy lasted it threw strange colours and fantastic hues all around, while all beyond was veiled in sombre shadow. As long as the glow of youth sent hot impulse through their life, hopes too human drove them on with flushed enthusiasm; fever poisoned all their natural needs and made them pant for pleasure when they should have had repose, crave with ceaseless thirst for draughts that only fanned the fire which burned into their bones; then frenzy caught them and flung them on from sin to sin, from low to lower depths, from what was fault of frailty to what was hardened guilt, from what was only goodness warped by evil to what became like the perversity of hell, from what was wrong yet measured by heart and sheltered by fancy, to naked wrong, foul, filthy, to everyone loathsome, like reptiles that oozily lurk in slimy places, or like the creeping things that batten on putrid horrors the very touch or breath of which can kill. When youth has passed or vigour failed, when even the world's excuse for sin has gone, yet the worldling crawls on where he had danced before. As they had sinned impetuously, so they now sin coldly; as they had sinned through blind

passion, so do they now sin with calculating cunning ; as they had sinned with magnanimous foolishness, so do they now sin with selfish, cynical, ignominious, unvarnished turpitude. At last the end comes. What an end ! The false lights are put out, phantom sights have vanished, phantom sounds are still. There remains only the broad daylight of truth flooding in upon a life from which it was shut out before. What a sight to see ! The clear sight of a worldling's life misspent up to the very end. All the shades and forms of sin grinning like old skulls ; all the waste ruin and desolation of good hopes, good aims, good inspirations ; all the tangled, broken heaps and masses of what might have been good, honest, noble thoughts or wills or deeds covered over with weeds and briars, filth and rubbish, ruin and despair. It is all over now. Pleasures such as they were are over. There is no more amusement, gaiety, enjoyment. That sort of thing is over. It is all over. Sin—that is left. It is carefully picked up, every particle of it, and the huge, rotten load is thrust on the worldling's back. It clings to him and goes with him, for it is himself or herself. Then the worldling and his sin are flung out into darkness. The worldling's life is over. It is the end. Pleasure is dead for ever, sin lives for ever, and the wages of sin is death.

At the worldling's death all aims and plans are left unsettled or insecure. They slip away and are lost to the dying, for the end has come. When a man's soul has been given up to the gathering together of riches, how real will not his gains have seemed to him if he should have prospered ! He will have felt the strong self-reliance of a man who knows by practical

proof what his own worth is, and he calmly but sincerely pities those who do not understand business as he does. When a woman in the budding of her beauty and the flower of her youth gives up her soul to vanity and the triumphant power which she holds over hearts, she may wonder in her own earnest hours if anyone could live and yet not wish to have charms like hers. When those who love the world seek in the world to realise those aims which captivate their souls their minds become narrowed down to that one aspect ; they see all things in the light thereof. It is their touchstone to determine truth and worth and good. All realities are centred there, and outside this realities of which men speak are but realities in name, real to them only as an interesting fiction and true as old stories about ghosts. Thus all lives which are worldly, in so far as they are such, look upon worldly life as the great reality of all. It is their real life. They are in it heart and soul. The rest, if not unreal, is only real like the sorrows of those who mourn in far-off countries which we only know of by the newspapers or by the map. So it follows, of course, that all their aims and plans are shaped and drawn to suit the world. Death comes with its reality, and then they find with horror and dismay that their realities were based on clouds, built up of dreams, and by lies held together. The real truth comes ; falsehoods vanish and clouds float away. There remain the ruins of worldly plans unfinished, of worldly aims that have fallen through. Whatever they got is gone for ever ; whatever they gained is the sport of others ; whatever they built shall be tumbled down or marred or thanklessly owned by those whom they did not love.

They have laboured to raise up ruins or to enrich their enemies. All this they clearly see as they lie in the grasp of death. Their plans and aims, however brilliantly or gloriously they may have succeeded in the phantom-life of the world, are to them real failures as they die, for death is the end of all. They are all over; there is nothing left; it is the end.

The life of the worldling ends with death. Life is the outward flow of energy which seeks abroad harvest of truth and good, bearing it home again to make itself stronger, nobler, and higher. Life may be turned astray and may bring home only chaff, or it may work in fruitful fields and bring home good grain. There is in life a gradual building up, a development, a growth. Life is not as something done quickly, done once, and done for ever. It is not altogether. It cannot be lived through by rush of energy or by an overwhelmingly impassioned wish. It must by long lengths and slow increase, like a tree, reach imperceptibly onwards and upwards. Now when a life is warped into worldly life its growth is worldly too; from the outside bark, rough or tender, to the inside wood, hard or soft, and to the inmost sap, vigorous or sluggish, it is all of it through and through of the world, worldly. Parasites may gather there and bear bright flowers or even fruitful seed; good thoughts, like bright soft mosses, may cluster on it; good deeds, like the hardy ivy, may twine around it and give it even in winter-time a look of green strong health, but within the tree is, according to its kind, worldly—that is to say, good for the fire and nothing else. Think of the days and months and years of living energy, hope and love, of thought, of sympathy and emotion, all

bringing in their fruitful life and vigorous sap only to feed the fire. Think of it; what a terrible thought. A whole life lost. The worth of an eternity flung into the fire. The life that might have climbed to heaven buried in clay. The life that might have been the child of God lost. It was given all to the world. It is over now, all is decayed; it is the end of it.

For those who serve God faithfully death puts an end to sorrow, for it is the beginning of a life of painless joy. There must be suffering in every human life, and there are in every human life moments when something pleasant must be given up. Look well at the difference here, between the life that is evil and the life that is good. There is a real difference in this that the sufferings of the good, though mingled with bitterness, are sweetened by grace and leave always an exquisite after-taste; the sufferings of the sinful are bitter always, bitter only and for ever bitter. The pleasures foregone by the good are sacrifices fruitful in joy. The pleasures left aside by the bad are unwillingly, grudgingly remembered with harsh, unavailing regret. While however this is true in reality, we must not forget that in our life upon earth appearances often do more than the solid existence of facts can do. Our life is so thoroughly and so intimately interwoven with the sights and sounds and touch of the outward sensible world, our feelings and our hearts are so eagerly turned towards the earth, that both the quickest, keenest, and clearest beliefs and thoughts of our nature, as well as our warmest, most restless, and most subtile emotions only see and only love things as they are lit up and coloured by outer flash or flush or sheen or reflection

of sense-phantoms. Thus it comes to pass that as worldly life appears to be gay, brilliant, and attractive to our lower nature, it is so in reality at first, until we bring calm clear reason to bear on its hollow fascinations. If worldly life be followed by wilful choice its falsehood comes out ever and always afterwards, but at the first glance of untried human hearts it does seem bright and charming. Then also it comes to pass that from time to time, and most of all in first effort to set free our soul from the tangle of earth-bounded hopes and wishes, spiritual life does seem dull, spiritless, dismal, and unnatural. Now death puts all this to rights. It remorselessly gives the lie to the world and its shows, holding the torch of truth up to the solid realities so that we must see them. Death ruthlessly wipes off the fantastical tinsel and paint which cover the wrinkles, ugliness, and sores of sinfulness, overwhelming its sham promises and revealing underneath them all the venomous face of the hateful, lying devil. Thus can the thought of death teach us the true and the real reality of life while we live. Thus can it give us comfort when we sigh under heavy loads or shiver amidst hardship. It is really the best life and the really happiest that lives looking forward to death's triumph and to death's truth. When death comes it tells the good that all their pains and troubles are over. It is really the end of death, for afterwards we shall never think of it. Death to those who have lived for death shall then be no more. Death to the good is only the beginning of life.

When a soul has been faithful during life in doing the duties set before it by our Lord, it must have

had to struggle bravely against the hostile forces of the world. It must have borne patiently with hardships and above all what is hardest for any soul that has a warm heart, true blood, and a generous nature bound to it; it must have held back its own love and energy when from within a mighty wave of impulse surged forwards towards what was really good and beautiful and lovable, but which could not be sought for or gained or loved without disloyalty to some nobler worth sanctioned by God's will. Life is a hard time at the best, for it must be a time of trial, it must be a time of danger, it must be a training time. But bravely and earnestly faced it is, after all, less hard than if we were to meet it with bowed head and sickly strength. Its hardness yields under the strong, rough grasp of energetic manhood. Its hardness wounds the nerveless fingers of effeminate ease. Its hardness is not so hard but that it may be softened by hardihood. Its hardness is hard enough to withstand or even to crush the half-hearted efforts of sluggards. In all this there is a training which weakens and disgusts those who try to shirk it, but which strengthens and emboldens the earnest souls of honest men. It is a training for death. It is a gradual tearing away of briars, a pulling up of weeds, a lopping off of hurtful branches. It is a gradual pruning to strengthen life, a propping it up to straighten it, a clearing away from around it of what it otherwise might cling to, so that it may spring up tall, full, free, and lordly towards the great heavens. It is a training time for the life of man, like the sowing time for the harvest; a time of toil and labour amidst frost or rain or bitter blasts for the sake of the harvest to come. Death brings the

time of strength and the time of harvest. The training time is over for ever, but the strength gained by it, its ease and grace and health, its sturdy freedom from sickness, from disease, from morbid craving remains. It has the exuberant flow of sprightliness, the enthusiasm of generous blood, the quickness of activity, the calm of hearty robustness, the sedate energy and forceful repose of a nature which under God's guidance, while shunning excess on one side or the other, has drawn out fully the fitly perfect growth of all its powers. Each day that such a soul has lived has added to its strength and brightness; each day has given it keen zest for what is true and good; each day has brought it quicker mightiness against evil; each day has made its hate of sin more noble, fierce, and relentless; each day has made its love for all that is worthily loved more high and broad and deep and more magnanimous. Why should such a soul dread death? Why should it not long for it? Death is the end of the training time, the end of the life that was hard; death is only the beginning of the perfect time, when training is merged into triumph, when the blithe hardness of good will becomes the adamantine sinlessness of eternity, when the love that was cared for through storm and danger becomes like a flower that shall not fade, like a palm-tree that flourishes by the waters which God hath set there, when the strong, the sweet that during earth's lifetime rarely went together are met for ever and joined in the everlasting union of peace.

We only look at death from this side of the grave. There is a veil between us and what lies beyond. We do not think enough of the truths that are told about

the far-off world by the words of Revelation. Death for the just is the end of exile ; it is the going home. Have you ever lived in distant countries amidst strangers and in want, where no deep sympathy shared your sorrows and no deep friendship embalmed your joys ; where you were lonely in toil, in suffering, home-sick, thinking of friends and of the land you loved ? Was it so hard to nod good-bye to the stray people you had known ? Was it so hard to shut for ever the door of the solitary room where you had grieved so often silently and where you had never been at home ? Was it so hard to clasp the hands of old friends, to hear the sounds of old voices, to see the old places, to feel in your heart all the thousand echoes rebounding and singing and sighing and warbling and chanting the old loved, never-forgotten ' Home, Sweet Home ' ?

When in the time of your youth, in your school-days the evening before vacation came, did you not go to rest with a happy, soothing, delicious dream of the morrow ? All seemed so bright then, the long year of study was over, its tasks were now left aside ; its memories dropping all that was sad or drear or irksome, gathering up all that was joyous and gay, glowed and gleamed like the dawn in a sky that blushes with awakening hope over laughing waters in a calm sea of the south. So you went to sleep gently and sweetly, with the past dead in its pain, living only to give tone and hue and warmer colour to the future. So you went to sleep. A sleep of fragrant dreams and quiet yearnings, a sleep like the stillness of summer woods when the last bird's note has died away and the evening incense rises up out of the meadows. So you went to sleep in your childhood so happily and so

hopefully. Such, too, is the Christian's slumber under the sign of the Cross, which the world calls death. Ah! look behind the veil, it is not death but slumber. Softly close your eyes; the angels are all around folding their white wings about you and whispering lullaby. Your mother is standing there straight in front of you, looking at you with her smile so sweet, bidding you sleep. Do you not know that gentle hands are on your brow, hands that were pierced by nails, lovingly closing your eyelids? Look up once before you sleep, and at your head, guarding you strongly and well, see your smiling Saviour. Sleep, gently sleep; it is not death but slumber. Oh! the awakening! You are home. At home for ever with Christ and His dear Mother. For ever at home in their own sweet home.

Death may be like a broken pillar or like the Cross, for it is either a blow that ruins or a sacrifice that upholds. Death to worldlings is like a blow, for they are utterly unprepared for it. Like slumberers awakened by earthquake or a ship that suddenly sinks in the calm, those who live for the world never realise that they are sure to die. They do not think of it or only as they think of the plot of a novel, with vague, dreamy dread or feelings that fade at the first freezing touch of the cold-hearted world for which they live. They have never taken serious thought about getting ready to go away. They are quite unprepared. What about the deaths of other people? That reaches them, for they may fear losses or hope for legacies. They look out eagerly to learn about births or marriages. They are really and honestly anxious about balls or about business, about theatres

or about stocks, about dress or about dinner, about hearing good sermons and reading immoral novels, about passing as pious and knowing the worst scandals, about anything and everything in this world from breaking hearts to clean linen, except about their souls. They have not the slightest idea of what it is to be anxious about one's soul. They really cannot understand, for they will not really think of it. It would be a very startling revelation to them if it should suddenly dawn on them that it is more necessary to be ready for death than to dress for dinner. They know this in an unreal way, but that is not real knowledge. It only helps the devil to delude them. When death does come it comes like a blow. They are not ready. They are not expecting it at all. They are utterly unprepared.

Death may be like a blow when it comes with a shock. 'Long threatening comes at last,' but it comes like a violent blow that crushes and stuns. They are overwhelmed. There may yet be time to repent, but, O God! how can they set about it? They never, perhaps, or only a long time ago seriously went about that sort of thing. It would bewilder them to do so now even if they were calm and strong, but they are broken down, wildly excited, or stupidly unconscious, utterly unfit for the task of putting a whole bad lifetime to right in a few seconds. It is a blow that violently and relentlessly breaks down all their past, sweeps away from under their feet the ground on which they thought they stood and dashes them against a hard fate. It is a blow. It does violence to all their ideas, all their hopes, all their wishes. It is a blow. It comes on them from without. It snaps

all their sympathies, dries up or wrenches away all their love. It is a blow. It blinds, it baffles them. It flings them into a world they never cared for and do not like—a world they know nothing of, except that to them it is and ever must be dark, dismal, horrible. What a terrible blow to the worldling is the death which flings his body into the grave and his soul before his angry God !

Death to the worldling is a blow, for its stroke brings fright. While a young girl is in the whirl, blaze, and triumph of a ball, amidst gay or tender words, through the fascinating flood of music and the merry movement of the dance a voice somewhere whispers 'She is dead,' and the girl shudders, for the ghost of her own death passes. Perhaps she can laugh it off. But she is never sure that her brightest joys and most dazzling triumphs may not be suddenly struck and withered by the ghost-like remembrance of her own death. As a rich man glories in his wealth, looking out over the broad plains that are his, he may see some young sapling which he has planted himself, and like a ghost the thought will come that when the sapling is a tree he will be in his grave, and where shall be all that he has gathered ? perhaps a stranger's, perhaps a spendthrift son's. And the ghost of death may come to poison his peace as he lifts the goblet of rich red wine to his lips, as he hears the bell from the church tower, as he is whirled along in the train, as he sees the leaves fall, as he reads the newspaper, as he meets an old friend, as he hears the merry voices of children, as he lies awake in the dead of the night, at any moment the thought of death may come, and to those who live for this world

it must come like a ghost that destroys their peace now by menace, like a ghost that will yet strike when they are not ready, that will strike a blow that ruins now and for evermore.

Death may be a sacrifice that chastens. When earth-clouds close round our soul hiding the light of truth, when vapours rise from out the depths of our own nature lulling us with poisonous heaviness to fatal sleep, when matter weighs us down, then from out the very clay there comes a warning voice, the voice of death to bid us turn back from pleasure that kills and awake from repose that is lethargy. For the very earth itself with all that is upon it cries out, to those who listen, the message of the grave: 'Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.' When giddy impulse spirits us away from wise thought and serious action, and hurries us through fitful change and never-ending search towards newer hopes and fresher aims, solemn and eternal words are murmured to the ear that is not deaf by the very accidents which come and go. For they all die, one after another, and they tell us that we too shall die like them, and that there is no wisdom worth learning, no good worth having which will not stand the test of thought by the tombstone. Now death speaking thus, and always as it does to the good, must be listened to with submissive mind and ready heart, and so it teaches us what is the secret of true life, that wrong pleasures and wrong pursuits must be given up, dangerous aims and actions honestly made straight. Thus death accepted as a sacrifice draws us away from evil, showing us the hollowness, the emptiness, the passing nature, and the crumbling life of all that meets us this side

of the grave. It shows us, too, the wisdom of the patient saints who bend to glean the golden grains of sorrow which line the path where passed our Saviour with the precious harvest of His Cross, that sowing them in tears they may yet reap in joy where tear there is none nor any sorrow, but where there is always the sunlight of heaven, for the Lamb is the Light thereof.

Death may be a sacrifice that strengthens. In every life not altogether evil there must come difficulties in keeping clear of sin. Either the height of rugged paths which must be climbed affrights us, or the easy slopes of undulating flowers which lead downwards win us away. In one case or the other, if we would be good we must offer sacrifice. The sacrifice of earnest vigour, or the sacrifice of stern denial. If already we have in spirit gone down into the grave and made the sacrifice of death, if with obedient will and quiet resignation we remember that we shall pass away through death from all things here to the store which we have treasured up by patience, then shall we feel a kindling sunlight fill our minds and a quickening energy flow through our wills to do the right manfully and to avoid the wrong nobly. The thought of death can steel the temper of our strength to face all lesser dangers and to pass through all lesser trials. The thought of death can give our wills a sturdy power to fling aside the clinging weakness of effeminate ease; a hardihood and robust character to trample on the cringing, simpering, alluring, fawning, cajoling suggestions of pleasure, for in the sight of death the just man has strength to make his choice with open mind and steady will. He has strength to make the

sacrifice which means the daring of difficulties, and strength to make that other sacrifice which means the shaking off of sloth or softness. He has the strength which comes of the calm of great truths, and the strength which comes from the following of high aims. He has the strength which is made steady by the weight of great responsibilities gravely taken up and of grave duties manfully fulfilled. He has the strength of a stranger passing homewards who will not stop for sweet words or for threats, since the land he journeys through is a land of exile and his heart and home are far away.

Death may be a sacrifice that blesses. There are two kinds of human joys; there is a human joy like the weak, capricious grasses that only live in the sultry, close, damp air of the hot-house; there is a human joy, sturdy and fresh and perennial, like the long, rich grasses that thrive in the churchyard, where the frosty icicles cling to them in winter-time, like sacrifices that retard yet strengthen the growth of our hopes where the white snow folds over them, hiding their green stems with a mantle that is cold to the outer touch but keeps a healthy glow within; where the sunshine gleams the brightest; where the breeze's sigh is saddest yet softest; where the wild winds blow their full with hardy blasts that make loud bluster and menace but bring plenty and hardihood. There are in human life pleasures like the repose of sloth, like the gorged satisfaction of fattened kine, like the drunken glee of excess, like the staring eyeball and convulsive laugh and unnatural merriment that will shout and yell in uproarious gaiety when it ought to steal aside and weep in silence;

but, thank God, there are also pleasures like the buoyant step of youth climbing mountain slopes, like the smile of a mother seeing the smile of her child, like the triumph of a soldier thanked by his father, like the peace that fills a priest's heart when he sends away a soul, that was sinful, pure as a babe, innocent as an angel, penitent as St. Peter. Now mark well the difference between these two kinds of joys or pleasures. The one is gained by weakness, the other is bought by sacrifice. The one lowers, the other elevates. The one unnerves, the other braces. The one is senseless and sodden, low, coarse, and transient; the other is noble, serene, high-minded, solid, and thorough. Strange though it should seem, sacrifice is the real test of pleasure that is true, and most of all the sacrifice of death can set aside the pleasures which are a curse from the pleasures which are a blessing. Death's inexorable truth defies the sophistry or wiles of worldly craft or wisdom. No man looking upon death can hide the truth even from his own eyes. If he walk not before the Lord, the truth is that his ways are wandering, and that he strays not only from duty but from happiness. If his steps are straight, then all the sacrifices of life are mellowed and toned down, all its honest joys are blessed from heaven, and over pains and over pleasures is sent forth a glorious splendour from beyond the grave which lights them up, transfusing them with pure warm rays from the sun of wisdom, giving them freshness and strength, giving them life and buoyancy, giving them hope and love, with the smile that makes all things good and beautiful, the smile of our Father in heaven.

The Broken Pillar is the sign of corruption, the Cross of resurrection. The worldling's body is flung into the grave and a broken pillar set above it. 'Ashes to ashes and dust to dust.' It is indeed true here, for the fire of love of the world has burnt up whatever was solid and good in life and left only ashes behind. Pleasure and pomp and pride have moulded and crumbled away and there is nothing left of them but a little dust. The strength so gloried in has failed. The remains of it are falling silently to pieces under the load of stones and clay heaved six feet high upon it. The beauty so loved and pampered is rotting to make food for worms, and no one cares for it now that it is safely hidden away lest it should poison the air with pestilence. The body which was the temple of sin and the prison of the soul while it breathed upon earth is now flung away and forgotten. Sometimes a sneer or spiteful laugh may follow it even then ; but thoughts of kindness or of pity, if ever they bud in gentle minds, fade quickly, while the only tears which flow for it now are the cold damp drops of moisture filtering through the soil to eat its bones away. The worldling's life is ended. The fascinations, pride, pleasures, glory even of sin itself are over; they are dead. But sin itself lives in its own native degradation with its folly unmastered, its loathsomeness laid bare, and its corruption hideously clear, plain, and evident.

The worldling's soul is hurled to hell with the curse of God upon it. Try for a moment to think the thought and realise the feelings which flush and quiver through the worldling's soul when the vision of death stands before it. Death means that the time

is come when creatures fail and the soul is left alone with its sin in the face of the wrath of God. God above in infinite anger, hell below with endless pain, between them the sinful soul shuddering as the last instants of its life are numbered before it reaches the brink. How does it not now wish in the agony of its terror that it had seriously thought of death before it was too late.

The bodies of the just slumber while angels watch by, waiting to bear them up to heaven. Kneel in spirit by the grave where sleeps someone whom you have known and venerated upon earth. There is a hallowed peace and quiet there. When voices fall upon the reverential silence of the consecrated spot their tones are solemn and subdued. The very birds sing gently, hopefully though sadly. They are tame and unaffrighted, for they dread no wanton wrong from the mourning figures that slowly tread the long, waving, luxurious grasses. Distant voices and sounds of young or active life burst strangely through the shadows of the churchyard, reminding us that all around outside is the busy, living world, but that this is the home of the dead. The gentle, upward heave of the mound, where the earthen vessel of light and love was lowered down, warns your feet away, although you may kneel to pray there, for it is like a long, deep sigh of the bosom of the earth yearning toward heaven. What tender stories of true hearts, fragrant memories, and noble faith are told by the few simple flowers left there to blossom in the sight of the Redeemer, like prayers whispered to His Heart, until the love that laid them there come back again with flowers like prayers and with prayers like flowers!

Look at the tombstones old and new. On one the Lamb is lying, the Book of Life is chiselled on another. Here is the Chalice of God's precious Blood. There are the instruments glorified with its stains during Christ's sacred Passion. One place are words of anguished regret, softened by hope eternal; other where bitter grief bows down for strength to the faith in Providence that upholds us and will bring us together again. Everywhere, everywhere, there is the Cross on which Christ died and through which is our Resurrection. Kneel and pray in the churchyard. Pray in sadness, for the good whom we have loved have gone away. But pray with solemn sweetness, for they only slumber. Trouble not the sleep of the just with pagan sorrow, but let your tears fall like soft, warm dew that shall foster strong faith and bright hope in your heart, so that when the sad, sweet time of your death comes you may slumber with the just under the blessed sign of the Holy Cross of Christ, pledge of the Resurrection.

The souls of the good are in peace; they see God face to face, whom they love, and are happy. Their joy is as the length and breadth and depth of eternity. When the just are near to death they are near the resurrection of their souls. Their body indeed must slumber for a while in the grave before it shall be given back to them glorious and immortal, but their souls go forth at once to enter the home of the blessed. They can calmly meet their death. Their life was straightforwardly true. They knew that the value of time lay not in itself but in that it can buy eternity. They listened to sober wisdom and to the illuminating Words of God. They walked before God all the

days of their life, and when wearied rested under the outstretched arms of the Cross that comforts whilst it shadows, and they ever and again renewed their strength at the banquet of our Saviour. They need not fear now, for, although our nature must tremble with awe and bowed-down worship when it goes forth from all that it knows by sight and touch and sound to the mysterious presence of God Who made and shall judge it, yet the soul that has lived for Him feels that He is within it, dwelling there like an unknown king welcomed during his exile, welcomed with loving trust and obedience until He returned to His kingdom with grateful remembrance, to crown in mightiness and in triumph the lowly heart that knew and served Him well in spite of the deceits and dangers that thronged about it. To the just the sadness of death is sweet; its awfulness is solemn not bewildering; its mystery is not of horror but of wonder; its message is not thundered in wrath but whispered in welcome. It is not shrouded in gloom and horror but veiled with softened halo. It is not the coming of endless night, but the breaking dawn of a glorious day that shall never sink in twilight nor ever fail to bring without shadow an infinite to-morrow, for it is not the corruption of death but it is life's Resurrection. Which will you choose? Shall death be to you like a Broken Pillar that marks the ruin of this life and has no other hope, or shall death be to you like the Holy Cross which gives grace and mercy here and hereafter Resurrection?

CHRIST SLEEPING IN THE STORM

But He was asleep.—Matt. viii. 23, 27

In southern countries where the heat is most intense and the sky most often cloudless storms are most sudden in their coming, most impetuous in their bursting, and in their violence most fraught with terror and with ruin. They are not gales nor tempests ; they are hurricanes, cyclones, and tornadoes.

Again, on the land-locked waters of lakes the loosened winds give less warning of their approach than on the open seas, and when they strike they strike with the quick, straight speed of an eagle's swoop and with a fierceness that thirsts for blood.

Do not, then, think that when our Lord and His disciples were caught by the storm on the Sea of Genesareth there was no more danger than a brave sailor might calmly face. No! It was more than danger. It was the actual presence, almost the touch of death.

Down broke the whirling tumult of darkness with the wild wicked shriek of the winds in their fury, with the horrible blinding confusion of air that savagely smote on the waters, and waters that savagely smote on the air. Around, in a delirium of onrushing rage or of back-flying panic the waves, bewildered by the quick, hard, changeful gusts of the gale, beaten to paroxysms of angry terror by the violent scourging

of its strokes uprose in rebellious billows or escaped away towards the depths of the sea. In the midst of it all a boat, flung up from the dark surging hollows or flung down from the white curling crests just held, with its few battered planks, for the moment from death the disciples of Christ—'but He was asleep.' Christ was asleep in the storm!

Wearied and worn, the thin, pale face of the loving Seeker of Souls was calm and still in sleep. His eyes were closed and His features were set in the motionless beauty of marble, but His breathing came and went in the long, low, rhythmical sighs of exhausted nature sunk to rest. The spray smote on His cheek and brow. The flowing folds of His hair and beard, heavy with moisture, clung to His face or were wildly tossed about in disorder by the rough wind. The shrill sounds and hoarse thunders of tempest whistled or howled in His ear—'but He was asleep.' As the slight ship bounded upwards, with desperate leap, to escape the loosened mountains of water that tumbled in crested deluge upon her, or as she fell back, down, staggering headlong into the hollow of the sea, the quiet figure of the Christ lay motionless, rocked in the grasp of the storm. His breathing came and went in unruffled cadence and measure amidst the eddying blasts of the tempest, His pale face was sadly smiling in the unconscious calm of slumber amidst the horror and rage of the death-dealing waters. His disciples were powerless, helpless at the moment of shipwreck, at the instant of death—'but He was asleep.'

At last when the waves—not in the long, deep, rounded swell of ocean billows, but in vertical ridges of

short, cramped, writhing, convulsed, and uncontrollable surf—crash in shattered, entangled, dizzy whirlpools over them 'so that the ship was covered with water,' His disciples clamorously awaked the Christ shouting: 'Lord, save us, we perish!'

Have you ever felt your heart tossed and tortured with tempest of passion or trial when you thought that God was asleep?

Some of you will have learned what it is to be shipwrecked on the wide, wide waste of the bitter world, to have your material hope and promise broken and buffeted about by an ever-advancing tide of stormy circumstance; to have all the labour of your life swept away by a deluge of pitiless power from above, or engulfed by treacherous depths from below; to be left blinded, nerveless, dismayed to struggle alone against the smiling cruelty or tempestuous fury of the feelingless waves of the world. Did you not think in the midst of the storm that surely God was asleep?

Others of you already know, and most of you must one day learn, what it is to watch by the death-bed of one that you love. Why are they taken away? The old, yes! Yes, alas! the old whom we cherish and reverence, venerable with saintly years upon their brows, admirable with endearing merits in their lives, ah! the old must pass away to their rest. We weep, but our tears are tranquil. We are sad, but our grief is calm. A saddened joy, like the mournful quiet of sunset, seems to linger round their fading life, and there is a hallowed peace in our sorrow when we watch the coming of death. But the young, the bright, and the innocent, the life that gave sunshine to the home,

the heart that made us unselfish by the childlike grace of its love, the soul that won us to virtue by the rapturous beauty of its innocence, why should the budding flower be plucked? Why should the young life that made our life holy die? As you knelt by the deathbed of one that you loved, did you not pray? Did not your whole frame tremble with the intensity of your entreaty? Did not your very heart swell and rock with tempest, lifting you up to a heroism of offering, flinging you down into an abyss of humility? Did you not pray with out-bounding gratitude when hope was whispered into your ear? When hopeless looks gave you mute messages of despair, did you not still pray with a low, low wail of the heart in an agony of supplication? When the shadows thickened and tumultuous waters of woe overwhelmed you till you could not even pray, did you not think that 'He was asleep.'

There is not one of you who does not know that there is such a thing as tempest of the heart and such a thing as shipwreck of the soul. It is easy to see the truth when the sky is clear and cloudless. It is easy to be brave when we have but to let ourselves be wafted towards Paradise by inspirations soft as the west wind, when we are carried away by happy ripples of grace that are strong as the swell of the sea and pleasant as laughing waters. But it is otherwise in temptation. Who can see in the storm? For the gloom of mingled waters that rise from the darkened depths and waters that fall from the blackened sky shrouds us in horrible night that is only lit by spectral figures of spray, ghastly and white, as though the corpses of drowned

men were flung up from the tombs of the murderous sea. Then there is no light. How can we know in temptation that there is harbour at hand? How can we calmly look out for the light when the folds of the darkness encircle our soul, when we cannot think with the dizzy blasts of our wicked doubt, with the bewildering blows of our passionate guilt? Who can be brave in the storm, when everything round us seems to reel and rock, when a few battered planks of resolve, set together in days that were calm, alone hold our soul from the surges of sin, while the waters of evil appear to rush over us till we wonder, dismayed and aghast, if we still are afloat on the waves or lost in their wicked embrace? Ah! were you so brave in temptation? Were you brave when, numb with dread and paralysed with exhaustion, you knew not whether or no your will still clutched with despairing grasp the only plank that was left you on the wide, whirling wilderness amidst the fathomless fury of sin? Were you then so mighty and brave? Or when you could no longer resist, when you could not uphold your soul from hell, did you shout in the storm to the sleeping Christ: 'Lord, save us, we perish!'

Hush! 'Jesus saith to them: Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up, He commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm.'

God's ways are wonderful. There is a mysterious heedlessness in His use of human means, a mysterious slowness in His work and feebleness in His effort, yet there is a mysterious awfulness in the simple unfolding of His plan and in the sublime completeness of His triumph. To mortal minds God seems to slumber in the danger and the darkness of the storm,

until they suddenly find themselves face to face with the dazzling divinity of His calm success. God's ways indeed are wonderful. He is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life' of men. Yet all His teaching rests upon this lesson that He is the veiled Word exacting blind trust, and all His way is strewn with human failures, proof of this, that Omnipotence in weakness can conquer all created strength; and all the life He gives us comes to this, that love brings sorrow and sorrow sympathy, and sympathy joins our hearts to His, first in fellowship of hard pain, then in friendship of happy peace.

God's ways are wonderful; not indeed that He works in our everyday life miracles of physical power that would destroy the order of Nature and clash against the harmony of His providence. But by paths of still more sublime wisdom and by helps of still more mysterious simplicity He guides us and He guards us, so that when the storm is fiercest round us, when our hearts are faint with horror, when our minds are dark with despair, then, though we in our human terror and human hopelessness think that Christ's watchfulness is slumbering; then, we know not how, but the clouds are parted to let pass a gleam of hope, the winds of adversity are strangely softened and the waves of the selfish world smoothen their harsh violence into rippling undulations that bear us safely home. We cannot feel this while the storm lasts, but we can believe that Christ is with us on the sea of life even though He seems to sleep, and we can trust that He will not suffer us to perish but will arise in His majesty to command the winds and the waves until, in God's way, there cometh a great calm.

Let the wild blasts blow! Let the tempest burst! Let the savage sea shake the earth with its thunder of rage and its tumult of strength! Let the day be lost in the night and the night be lost in the storm! Let all from above crash down! Let all from below give way! Let the dizzy confusion around us blind the thoughts of our mind and unnerve the manliest hold of our will! Let each one of the world's blessings be taken away till we mourn with the terrible grief of Job! Let the life-giving love of our loved ones fail us through falsehood or forsake us through death, till we wear out our desolate days and weep away our disconsolate nights with the point of the steel in our heart and the tread of our foot on a grave! Nay! let the demon revel within us in passionate riot and blasphemous pride till we fancy almost that his sins are our own, and we wonder, with weird misgivings, whether the sleeping Christ will ever awake! Let the blasts blow; let the storm burst! We are not alone on the sea. We are safe with our slumbering God. Let the Christ sleep! He is wearied with seeking us, worn with the toil and the pain He paid for our life. He has found us now in the storm. Let the Christ sleep! God will not perish, and we are with God. Let the Christ sleep, on the sea, in the storm! Believe! He is the Divine Giver of your life! Trust! He is the Human Lover of your soul! Let the Christ sleep! In His own good time he will arise and bring back to our tempest-tossed hearts a great calm.

Afterwards we can wonder and worship, repeating with full hearts the words of the disciples: 'What manner of man is this that the winds and the sea obey Him!' What manner of man? Yea! One Who

owns the omnipotence of God. What manner of man? Yea! One Who has a true human heart. What manner of man? God's power throbbing in a human heart. He it is that is with us in the storm. He seems to sleep. Yes, that you may trust Him and prove that you do not doubt His love. He seems to sleep. Yes! But hear what He says in the song of songs, the prophetic canticle of His love, 'I sleep, but My heart watcheth!' Even though the eyes of Christ seem to be closed in the storm, even though His features are fixed in the unconscious calm of repose, even though His breathing rise and fall, unruffled by the beating of the tempest, even though His ears seem deaf to the wild wailing of your heart, to the piteous pleading of your prayer, yet His heart beats with warm blood and throbs with love that never sleeps. His heart's love never sleeps; His heart's love watches over you as wakeful mother watches her slumbering babe. His heart's love waits beside you, as father's strength that shields his child. His heart's love never sleeps. Even though pain or trial or the loss of those you love appear to circle you with night and tempest, His heart's love watches and waits, and will bring you in God's own way and in God's own time a great calm.

THE HUMAN CHARACTER OF CHRIST

NOTHING finite can be infinite. This truism may be put under a form which is less blunt in its denial although equally accurate in its logic—a form better suited for our present purpose, by saying that no creature can be absolutely perfect. Absolute perfection includes every perfection that does not involve some imperfection. Absolute perfection is therefore only possible in God.

The very fact that a thing is made or created essentially implies that it is realised as a certain definite kind of thing, and this essentially implies that it is distinct and different from any other kind of thing. Now the characteristic nature of a definite creature may be to merely stop short at a certain kind of perfection, or it may further positively exclude with essential opposition the perfection of another kind.

This is not merely true of substance, it is also true of quality. With regard to quality, however, a further question must arise. One substance must remain distinct from any other substance, but in one substance many qualities may combine. One quality cannot indeed become another quality, but some different qualities may become intimately united in one substance while other qualities are utterly antagonistic.

Here we find a fundamental difference between qualities that are spiritual and qualities that are material. In the world of the spirit there is an unending difference of kind, but there is no conflict, no struggle for existence, no war; in the world of matter there is opposition, contrast, clash, the battle of forces opposed and irreconcilable, so that order is the outcome of strife. Wherefore, while different kinds of knowledge may dwell within the same mind, for truth is never hindered or hurt by truth, different kinds of colour or of sound cannot, without clashing, exist together, unless either their differences are only degrees of kinship or their discord has been, by the yielding of one to the triumph of the other, brought to the peace, not indeed of unison, but of harmony. The notes of music may be linked into the measure of one melody or interwoven into the web of one harmony, but if the keys jar or the notes clash it is no longer music. Colours may be set together in Nature or by Art, but the place of one can only through its destruction be taken by another; nor can different colours unite into one picture unless there be the subordination of all others to the unity of one tone and to the central point of one light.

Again, in the perspective of a picture there is the symmetry of foreground and of distance which demands the subservience of many objects to the predominance of one.

Further, this logically leads to another fact of order in Nature and to another law of beauty in Art—namely, that there are countless types, all good and all beautiful, but so different as to be beyond comparison. The lily, the rose, the orchid, the violet have each their

own exquisite loveliness which the others cannot rival, but outside which they have themselves no other charm. This is true of the trembling gracefulness of the arbutus and of the majestic spreading of the oak. It is true of the slender limbs of the antelope and of the massive moulding of the lion's chest.

Now all this is also true of human character. The moral character of man includes the twin elements of intellect and sense. Now those qualities of character which vibrate to the touch or thrill of sense-knowledge or of emotion, must obey the same law as the qualities of colour or of sound; and while it is true that the purely spiritual qualities of mind and will, if considered in themselves, need never clash, yet it is also true that these very qualities, being interwoven with kindred qualities of material fibre or of material tone, cannot be realised within the same soul unless they too are balanced by the same rhythm or moulded by the same type into one masterpiece.

That, as a matter of fact, we meet amongst men with characters of very different sort is evident even to the most superficial experience. It is not merely that such characters when compared stand out often in picturesque contrast. They seem sometimes so opposed as to be like each other in little more than that they are human. This fact is found amongst ordinary folk; but it is more startling as well as more strange in the vividness and contrast of its colours amongst characters that are great, even though they should be only great in evil. The pirate or the pickpocket, the desperado or the dastard, the cynic or the sensualist are quite as different types as are the lion or the snake, the tiger or the skunk, the crocodile or the dog. Nor

is this only true of great sinners, it is also true of great saints. St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, St. Paul and St. Joseph, St. Augustine and St. Jerome are instances of saintly characters that are quite unlike.

The differences amongst types of holiness may often be easily recognised as the outcome of a harmony of moral qualities in which one or other virtue predominates over all the others, while these in turn take their measure and their tone from that one supreme influence. Now while we readily remark those types of character whose special personality is due to the overmastering predominance of zeal or of gentleness, of strength or of affection, of simplicity or of self-sacrifice, we may ask ourselves whether a character may not be great in goodness by the noble nature of its moral gifts and graces, although no one gift or grace is nobler than the rest, but all are balanced in equal measure and work with equal power. To this I answer, in the first place, that many melodious sounds do not make music unless they accord in the unity of one key and are obedient to the control of one rhythm ; nor can many colours combine into a picture when they are all equal in vividness of light and place of power, with no more unity than the possession of the same canvas. Thus, too, while moral qualities considered in themselves are capable of indefinite excellence, that excellence must be realised in a definite and limited degree in order that it should exist in fact. This limitation will be determined in actual existence not merely by the finite nature of that quality, but also by reason of its union with other different qualities of more or less intensity. For in one life a great

intensity of energy will not allow of an equal intensity of calm, nor will a character cast in the heroic mould of generosity be conspicuous for prudence in quite as full and marked a measure. It may be indeed that a soul should be admirable for a balance and proportion of its virtues so finely fitted that they almost seem to be equal in their practical perfectness. But, on the one hand, such a soul would have for its chief characteristic a sameness and a monotony incompatible with great moral majesty or with great moral beauty; and, on the other hand, as it would not be striking in its spiritual attractiveness, so neither could it be dazzling in spiritual magnificence nor masterful in spiritual power. In reality such a soul could have no special characteristic beyond, perhaps, that of even-minded prudence. No one quality could have the same high perfection which it would have were it to be heightened so as to become dominant, while the other qualities should be less intense in order to chime with it in the harmonious measure of one splendid but definite type. Indeed some moral qualities cannot combine in living life except in unequal measure, for the grandeur or forcefulness of one must overshadow or impede the other. They cannot be all equally prominent or the perfectness of symmetry and the unity of harmony would fail.

Were one to ask what kind of human character was realised in Christ, some pious souls might shrink back from any answer as though it were a lack of reverence even to ask the question. Yet, surely, there can be no lack of reverence in seeking to know our Lord as He was known by those who dearly loved Him and devoutly studied Him while He dwelt on

earth. Others would answer that in Christ all virtues, all qualities, were perfect. If this answer should suppose that the qualities of Christ were absolutely perfect, the answer is not accurate. There can be no quality in Christ's human nature that is not finite, and there is no finite quality which might not become more intense. Wherefore, even in the God Man, each virtue, each quality could be, if considered by itself, higher and better than it actually is. Others answer that in Christ all virtues, all qualities, are equal in excellence. But in this case the character of Christ would not only stop short in perfectness, it would be imperfect, for there would be no reason why each gift or grace should not be greater. The true answer would appear to be that the character of Christ was of a definite kind, of a special sort, of a truly characteristic type, and that therefore the character of Christ was in its own way positively perfect, because each virtue, every excellence, was as good, as strong, as beautiful as it could possibly be without clashing against the cadence or breaking through the harmony of one exquisite loveliness of a type exclusive in its own special kind because characteristic in its own inimitable charm.

When God destines a great man for a great mission He makes and moulds that character so that it shall be fitted to achieve that end. Now the aim of the Incarnation, in God's present providence, required a character far different from that which would have been suited to the carrying out of a different plan. Wherefore God's wisdom will have chosen a type of character for His Christ that should make Him the ideal Man of our actual world. This was all the more

essential as the divine teaching and guidance of men were to be entrusted, in their definite practical working out, to the living co-operation of the human brain and human heart of Christ. But beyond its inherent nature a character will become developed in certain special qualities and accentuated in certain special traits according to the kind of work which calls forth the special exercise of certain powers, and according to the sort of circumstances which by their reaction evolve special potentialities. Furthermore, outside all this a character will have its perspective ; for in the history of a life some qualities will be seen in bold relief, while others, although they may be in reality of equal grandeur, will yet appear to be less prominent because hidden in the background.

Reverently we will contemplate the human character of Christ. We will study in the Gospels the outward evidences which show the inward kind of His moral personality. What manner of man was Christ ?

When we contemplate the character of a great man our thought will naturally turn to gaze first upon those gifts of mind which in him are most manifest ; then it will pause in reverent admiration to study those moral graces which are the special features of his human personality. With regard to those characteristics which are of the mind, we may consider separately the faculties that are akin to sense and the faculties that belong to the order of spiritual thought. Those first faculties we may group together under the one chief idea of fancy, while we may broadly speak of the others as aspects of intellect.

Fancy holds a foremost place amongst the mental characteristics of the noblest of noble minds. One

function of fancy is vividly to perceive and lovingly to appreciate what is true and beautiful in Nature; another function is to clothe its recognition of reality and to adorn its creation of art with the light and the loveliness, the emotion and the music, which it has learned from Nature to know and to love. It is true that there are great minds which are deficient in fancy, but their greatness belongs to an inferior type and narrower sphere. It is also true that there are minds of vivid fancy, and amongst them even artists whose fancy is not in sympathy with Nature; but such artists are mere imitators, they are only artists in the work of the hand, they have no creative power of head or heart to enrapture, elevate, and bless the world. There is no beauty in character that is not akin to beauty in Nature, and loving kinship with Nature finds its expression and its counterpart in a fancy whose art is innocent as well as true and beautiful. Innocent art does not seek for its ideals in the street, nor does it elaborate them in the studio, but it finds them on the mountain or in the meadow; it lingers with them where the brook murmurs or the birds sing; and it learns to understand their meaning from the messages brought by the mysterious sea.

Now think of what travellers tell us about the country where the Son of David dwelt. Rarely did He speak in the crowded cities, and when He did there was a tone of reproach or of strife or of anger in His voice. Most often He preached to the people amid the fair green fields or by the lake shore and sometimes even from the boat. Almost all His illustrations are taken from country life and show an intimate practical knowledge of the toil of the

husbandman, or of the shepherd's care. He often paused to comfort the sad or to heal the sick where the wild flowers grew. One kind of lily is found in wild profusion about Nazareth and on Thabor. It peeps out from the forest edge and flushes with warm beauty the face of the meadows, and bends in clusters over all the pleasant paths. Its inner petals meet above and form a canopy such as no art can rival nor 'king ever sat under.' 'Not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these.' One lily is white, another bright red and large, somewhat like our tiger-lily. Everywhere the rich, warm colours of the tulip and the pale, gentle narcissus bloom. The vine flourished rather in Judea than in Palestine, for so spoke the prophecy 'Juda shall wash his garments in the blood of the grape.' The birds of the air are very many; the rocky places are full of partridge; the meadows are thronged with quail and lark, while the turtle-dove or the pigeon is heard in every grove and seen on every cliff. There too the strong-winged, sagacious raven finds from the hand of the great Creator food for its little ones, and in Palestine the bright sky is often shadowed with the speck of a distant eagle. It is a land where colours are bright and beautiful, where the scenes are fair, where the voices of Nature are many and musical. It is a land where a man of pure and elevated fancy would learn from the beauty of Nature beautiful expression for noble truths.

It seems only natural that our Lord should love the flowers and the birds; that the truths He taught should be clothed in colours caught from the lovely land in which He lived; and that His messages to

human hearts should thrill with a purity of passion and a poetry of pathos only possible when the strongest chords of deepest feeling are touched by a tenderness simple as Nature yet divine as God. Thus the lilies that met Him along the wayside or filled the fields with bright red splendour; the raven that watched Him from above or the fox that peered out from its burrow; the simple sparrow that chirped near or the eagle circling in the distance; the patient plough, the quiet sheepfold, the vineyard rich with ruby treasure, the boat laden with dripping spoil of the deep; the sunrise which He had seen, in its calm triumph or in its sullen threat, breaking from beyond the eastern plain; or the sunset in the Mediterranean, which He had gazed upon from the hills round Nazareth, as it transfused the clouds to gold or scarlet and dyed the waters with crimson blood, until at last it faded into pale green sky and purple sea—these outward scenes of His childhood, youth, manhood, won to sympathy of feeling and of fancy the human expression of the Word that was eternal.

Wherefore, wonder not, that when Christ proclaimed His kingship His proclamation should be made under a metaphor, clear as it is emphatic, simple as it is sublime, poetical as it is logical, beautiful as a dream yet tangible as a fact.

Out among the meadows, far from noisy street or striving traffic, the people gathered round our Lord. As they stood or sat on the long green grasses wild flowers clustered at their feet; the soft, kind breeze of early summer brought them the freshness of the field and the fragrance of the garden; while from the cloudless heights of untroubled blue came

the glory and gladness of the sunshine. He was telling them of His eagerness to lead them to the land of plenty and of peace, of His watchfulness lest harm befall them, of His ceaseless care that forgot no need, of His unfailing kindness that fulfilled each want, of His knowledge of them and intimate appreciation of their various character, of His personal friendship for each child of His heart, of His boundless benevolence towards all, of His devotedness unto death. While He is speaking the silence of deep emotion stills the faintest whisper of the crowd. But from afar, where the flocks are slowly straying through the pastures, the breeze bears the voice of the shepherd as he calls each sheep by its name and their bleating answer is heard as the flock follow the voice that they know so well. The scene is eloquent with truth. One word alone is wanting in its revelation. That word is born within the heart of Christ and flutters forth from His lips : ' I am the Good Shepherd.'

When we begin to meditate upon the intellectual characteristics of Christ we are prepared to meet with grandeur of ideas and forcefulness of thought. Yet our anticipations are quite overwhelmed with the dazzling brilliancy and inundating influence of this Man's mental power. At first we gaze in mute amazement at the splendour of this revelation, until our thought is lifted up to purer calm of contemplation, when we behold from out that strangely noble harmony of graces some special gifts loom in special magnificence. Three traits seem to be conspicuous in the intellectual character of Christ—the grandeur of His ideas, His love of contrast, and His logical pointedness. His grandeur of ideas is exemplified

everywhere. One evident instance of it is His praise of the Baptist. 'What went ye out into the desert to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are in costly apparel and live delicately are in the houses of kings. But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you and more than a prophet.' No thinker ever made a great truth so simple nor did ever orator utter his prophecy in speech more sublime. There is no need to say that our Lord's mind was too great to become ever trivial or commonplace, as it was too refined ever to condescend even in the most homely matters to anything approaching the vulgar or the coarse. His love of contrast is very striking, and the manifestations of it are most frequent. The Wise and the Foolish Virgins, the Pharisee and the Publican, Lazarus and Dives, the Unjust Steward and his Fellow-servant, the parable of the Good Samaritan are some examples of this intellectual tendency. A love of contrast or antithesis is the result of intense vividness of perception: strong, swift grasp of opposition in ideas, joined to an impetuous yet realistic imagination that can paint a picture to haunt the soul with some few bold, masterful strokes. A third trait is His logical pointedness that pierces like rapier thrust or severs with the clean, clear cut of surgeon's knife. When the hypocrites came with pious purr and sleek humility yet with cat-like claw to tear, asking about tribute to Cæsar, their answer came upon them like a flash of lightning: 'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.'

One might linger over the study of many other

mental qualities which are found in varying force or prominence in the character of our Lord; but perhaps it will aid us to come to a more thorough appreciation of His more personal intellectual powers if we consider a fundamental difference which divides into two distinct orders of thought the world of able men. On the one side there is the analytic mind. Its bent is towards the examination of detail, the investigation of facts, the unravelling of reasons. It begins from what is small, insignificant, near; it goes on by the adding of further experiences; it aims at a complete and exhaustive catalogue of knowledge. It is the scientific mind. It triumphs in the surprising of Nature's secrets by the tests of its laboratories, or it divines the unwritten history of cosmic elements and predicts the fate of future ages by the records of the rocks or by the swerving of the stars. On the other side there is the synthetic mind. It begins where the analytic mind ends; while the analytic mind works up from trifling detail, the synthetic mind works down from perfect principle; its action consists in the wide grasp of harmonised truths, and its aim is the understanding of the unity of knowledge rather than in the learning of the separate sciences. The regions of these two kinds of mind must overlap. There is no scientific analysis which does not require at least a scientific theory to give it cohesion, and the synthesis that should not lean upon analysis must float away from the reality of fact to the dreams of mere fancy. But at the same time there is a strong and singular contrast between these two characters of mind. The analytic mind may be keen, accurate, tenacious, inventive, forceful; but it is the

mind rather of the learner than of the teacher, rather of the student than of the scholar. It is the mind rather of talent than of genius. It may make a good tactician, but not a great commander of men. It may make a brilliant lecturer, but not a great statesman. It may make a successful scientist, but not a great philosopher.

Wonder at the masterful way in which Christ with comprehensive yet easy grasp holds the truth, and without any heaping together of details sets it in clear and enduring evidence before men's minds for ever. The Beatitudes, the Sower of Seed, the Widow's Mite, the Prodigal Son, with many other illustrations of His teaching, stand out against the horizon of thought like landmarks of eternity in the midst of the fluctuating tides of time. Where the mountains look down on the sea, the waves rise and fall with the ripple of their laughter or with the thunder of their wrath ; but the silent mountains look down unmoved till the sunshine fades and the storm dies. So, while the noisy generations of men with their chattering surf or wicked surge pass and repass from the dawn to the dark, the great lessons of the great Master remain in their unapproachable grandeur and quiet evidence steadfast as the pillars of heaven.

We know indeed that Christ was God, and that the religion which He founded was not a creation of His human brain but a message from the Eternal Word. That marvellous system of intellectual truth, so vast yet so united, so complex yet so harmonious, so ineffable in its mysteries yet so intimately interwoven with reason, so awful in its power yet so exquisite in its beauty, could not have been thought out by man.

Neither could the noblest genius that ever breathed have devised a moral system so pure yet so human, so inexorable in the right of its authority yet so sweeping in its vindication of social equality, so uncompromising in its balance of justice yet so lavish in its honour for the poor, so unchangeable in its principles yet so prudent in their application, so far reaching yet so simple, so near to man while yet akin to God. Still we must remember that the human nature of Christ was no dead mechanism wherewith should be recorded the revelation that was divine; nor was Christ as man merely a voice to re-echo the words that were breathed by the Spirit upon His soul. Nay! He was a prophet and more than a prophet. His intellect and will, His human brain and human heart, were lifted up to be a living instrument that should vibrate in its own tone to the touch that played upon it. Rather His intellectual and moral powers took their intellectual and moral share in His thoughtful and chosen understanding and utterance of His message, so that, while this message is itself a revelation of the Godhead, it yet bears unmistakably stamped upon it, in its actual, definite shape and setting, evidences that reflect the special human characteristics of the Christ. Wherefore we recognise a Philosopher more profound than any thinker of any time, as well as a most loving Poet of Nature, and an Orator like whom no man ever spoke.

In the moral system promulgated by Christ the most striking feature is the supremacy of love. Truth, indeed, is most reverently revealed and most emphatically enforced; but the aim of truth is that it lead to love. Pagan power was based on force and upheld

by fear ; Christ's good tidings bore no threat to those who listened. His empire was founded on the claim that 'Love expelleth fear.' Wherefore we should wonder did we not meet in every phase and in every aspect of Christ's human character with proofs not only plain but prominent of a strange intensity and of a strange excellence of love. In our contemplation of Christ's special qualities of heart and will we may avoid wandering with endless analysis amidst all the fair flowers which we meet, and we may rather gain a complete conception of this moral paradise by taking as landmarks for our thought those personal characteristics which seem to set apart in clear types the moral attributes of our human race. We will then reflect on how far and in what way Christ was child-like, womanlike, and masterful in manliness.

There are men, amongst them even great men, who do not care for children. They may be men of great intellect or of great will-power ; they may be good men ; they may be men who are kind ; they may be men who can win and who can give love ; but there is a flaw somewhere in their character. However high they be in moral principle, however stainless they be in moral conduct, there is a trace of selfishness however unconscious. However condescending they be in their forbearance, however generous they be in their mercy, there is a lack of sympathy which is akin to hardness. The character of those who love children is in so far one whose fondness is without self-seeking and whose sympathy is as spontaneous as it is uncalculating, as gentle as it is true and as helpful as it is warm. On the other hand, those whom children love are really lovable. Children with

unerring instinct know whom to love. You remember that exquisite delicacy of touch and vivid evidence of truth with which the poet paints the whole character of a man by the coming of a child to put unasked its hand in his and look up into his face with fearless smile. When you look into a child's eyes you there behold, without cloud of suspiciousness, without gloom of deceit, without glare of knavery, the serene yet simple presence of a soul. A child that is childlike is truthful, frank, outspoken, trustful. Now our Lord was so straightforward that His enemies, knowing well His candour and counting on His childlike honesty in speech, sought time after time to trip Him in His words and lure Him by cunning question into the approval of a doctrine or of a decision fraught with danger of apparent harshness towards the people or of apparent defiance towards the law. They knew that He could not be either cruel towards the fallen or contemptuous towards authority. Therefore did they drag into His presence the woman taken in adultery, asking Him if they should stone her. They knew that He would answer openly and fearlessly. His answer was childlike in its clear, swift intuition of the point, of its real reason, and of its ready issue: 'Let him that is without sin cast the first stone.' So when with purring plausibility and cat-like cunning they proposed their sanctimonious scruple about paying tribute to Cæsar, the answer came with the clearness of the sunshine and with the simplicity of a child: 'Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's.' Many other childlike characteristics are evident in almost every incident of our Lord's life. He was so glad to help,

so quick to sympathise, so easily won, so readily moved to pity, so swift and thorough to forgive and forget harm repented of, so generous, so full of warm, deep feeling for the material wants of others, so eager to aid the poor, that our thought finds throughout the history of His days on earth the exquisite freshness of a child's mind and the unalloyed ardour of a child's heart. But we may reverently meditate upon one special and peculiar characteristic of a true child. We may reverently call it the adorable playfulness of our gentle Brother. An instance of this is to be seen in His bidding Peter to come to Him across the waters, knowing what a fright the impetuous, warm-hearted but still foolish Apostle would get when he realised what he was doing, took alarm, feared first, then doubted and began to sink. Or again, when in order to give a rapturous surprise to the broken-hearted Magdalen as she wept over His empty tomb He simply called her by her own dear name, 'Mary.' Or again, when He joined the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, walked and chatted with them, drew them on to tell Him all their troubles, pretended to go further on so as to give them the chance of forcing Him to accept their invitation to tarry with them, and only made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread. Or again, when the woman taken in adultery was brought before Him, He stooped down and with His finger wrote upon the sand. First one then another and another Pharisee recognised the meaning of what was written, and, as each of them with horrified amazement and with arrant discomfiture read the plain story of his own secret sin, slunk away cowed and shamed. When all had gone the playfulness

was followed by an infinite pathos. 'Doth no man condemn thee?' 'None, Lord.' 'Neither will I condemn thee. Sin no more.' Were our hearts childlike, simple, pure, fresh with fragrant affection and with untainted love, they would be in a noble sense most human and yet in a most true sense divine. Try to keep if you have never lost it, or by forgetfulness of evil to regain, the hallowed innocence of a child. What a happy ignorance that is which knows not, or which only knows so as to forget or to avoid the hollowness, the fraud or the guile of the world; which knows not how to play the hypocrite nor how to overreach knaves; which has not even learned to doubt the word of honour or to ask for proofs of love! And oh! that other inexperience—that thrice hallowed ignorance which does not know vice, which does not recognise or at least shudders to rest upon the sight or sound of sin; which has not even learned how hearts can be shaken, if not shattered by human passion or by too human love! Oh, happy, happy life, when mind and heart are childlike, when thoughts are clear, harmless, and sparkling as a dewdrop on a rose, when affections are pure as an angel's prayer and calm as summer stars! Oh, blessed child-soul, with a mind like a May morning and with simple wild-flower love!

As minds that are of vulgar mould or dull type fail to appreciate or even understand the majesty or the meaning of what is beautiful in Nature, so characters that are coarse or cold cannot admire, nor can they even clearly know, the loveliness which may be found in human hearts. The broad outlines and the strong colours are evident to all, but it is only

the artist eye that can discover the graceful curves or tender tones which make an ideal picture. It is only the soul which is fascinated by high aims and enamoured of noble qualities that can recognise the refined traits and delicate shades which render man or woman a spiritual joy, a thing of beauty. Thus, most people in distinguishing the characteristics of manhood and of womanhood stop short at certain rough aspects which rather describe what each is not than define fully what each is. But when we study them with deeper wisdom of the heart, we shall find many positive elements of moral loveliness which are peculiar to the character of woman or of man. Indeed, true manhood and true womanhood are alike in many mental and moral attributes, but also with deep differences. We cannot now tarry to analyse this whole matter, yet we may indicate some characteristics which are admirable and exquisite in each. This we will do gradually, while devoutly gazing upon some further manifestations of the character of Christ. Now in Christ the majestic qualities of manhood and the tender qualities of womanhood are united in a strangely full and perfect way. Fashioned of what was most perfect in human clay, unstained and untainted by the weaknesses or blemishes of Paradise lost, moulded by the omnipotent will of the Infinite Artist God, Christ as man realised, as never man before or since, the excellence and the symmetry, the vigour and the balance, of what is most majestic in manly frame and what is most masterful in manly character. Yet at the same time the noble traits peculiar to noble womanhood were realised in Christ as they could never be realised in any other

man. Child of a Virgin-Mother, Jesus owed all the material substance of His life to the woman that bore Him. Having no father according to the flesh, there was no other type to mould or vary the likeness of His features, no other blood to modulate the throbbings of His heart, no other brain to thrill to the touch of His character, no other than those that had been conceived within a shrine of inviolate innocence and nurtured on a Virgin's bosom. Thus, while Christ was most masterful by reason of His own perfect manhood, He was also most womanlike by reason of His virginal birth. Now one quality far more often met with in an intense degree in woman than in man is pity for the poor and deep feeling for another's material wants. That He was born in a stable, and that afterwards 'The Son of Man hath no place whereon to lay His head,' may appear to have been the choice of His Father's providence; but that He should Himself have tenderly loved the poor, that He should have painted with such compassionate touch the picture of Lazarus, that His first miracle should have been a bountiful gift of good wine at a marriage feast, that one of His most magnificent miracles should have been the multiplication of loaves and fishes in order to feed the hungry people, that He should have Himself admitted that He was moved to work this wonder by His pity for the famishing crowd—these are some instances that show how womanlike His own great heart was in its intense tenderness towards the material wants of our poor human nature. Few qualities are so prominent in Christ's character as is His sympathy for suffering. Wherever He passed they brought their sick or their

dying, and even their dead. To all He gave His most kind and gentle succour. To the sightless He gave sunshine, to the deaf He gave the music of articulate sound, to the lame or crippled He gave strength and vigour, to the leper He gave the clean skin and ruddy glow of fresh health. You remember His answer to the sad stricken one who murmured, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' 'I will.' There could be no slightest shadow of doubt about His willingness to bear blessing to wounded body or harassed heart. Even when it seemed right that He should restrain His merciful helpfulness, yet the very touch of the hem of His garment brought healing to the sick woman. To use our human way of explaining the movements of the human heart, He could not withstand the appeal of suffering or of sorrow. The people instinctively felt this and counted on it. When his friends, determined at any cost to secure success, lowered the man sick of the palsy down through the broken roof, right in front of the Christ, our most merciful Master bade the paralytic to take up his own bed and walk. The great, strong Christ Himself admitted that had He been present when Lazarus was passing away He could not have let His dear friend die. When, under the walls of Jericho, the blind man, darkling amid the throbbing glory of the sunshine, heard that the great Prophet Who had arisen in Israel was about to pass, shrieked in a supreme appeal, with alternating ebb and flow of hope and of despair, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' that cry of agony shook with pity the kind heart of Christ, and won for those dark eyes the revelation and the rapture of the daylight. Sympathy so

intense, so deep, is more than we meet in man—it is womanlike. The coarser fibre and rougher grit of manly men seems generally to exclude, or at least to lessen, that delicacy of feeling which we find in the true type of the gentle sex. Our Lord kept secret to the last, except from the Apostle whose head was resting on His heart, the treachery of Judas. After His Resurrection our Lord took care to give to the broken-hearted Peter a solemn and memorable opportunity to repair the sin of his denial and to make public profession of his love. Again, our Lord at the marriage feast worked His great miracle with such quiet delicacy, in order to shield the bridegroom and the bride, that the chief steward did not know whence the wine had come. Again, with a thoughtfulness of mercy that reaches to the exquisite delicacy of a noble woman's nature, He defended the Magdalen against the contempt of the Pharisee and against the reproach even of His own Apostle; just as He protected the woman taken in adultery against her cruel accusers by an unexpected stratagem of refined tactfulness as well as of unmeasured mercy. It is as easy for a cynic to sneer at emotion as it is easy for a dunce to sneer at poetry or for a knave to sneer at honour; but honour, poetry, and emotion are graces of life that are never found amongst the brainless or heartless, and are only the outcome of chivalrous natures, refined ideals, and pure love. What is human is open to extreme, and what is most human is most open to an extreme which pushes wisdom into folly, refinement into affectation, and emotion into weakness. Yet the possibility of pushing what is good into an extreme that is vicious does not make the golden mean of an exquisite

virtue less admirable or less worshipful. Thus the tenderness of a good-hearted woman has a special charm for love and a special claim on reverence which are not equalled even in the best-hearted men. There is something so fond yet so forceful, so clinging yet so supporting, so eager yet so self-forgetful, so fascinating yet so simple, so reverential yet so protecting, so outpouring yet so enduring, so ideal yet so homely, in the tenderness of the true woman that the thought of it can nerve the strength of man in danger, and bow the soul of man in prayer, and bind the heart of man in love. Think of that womanlike tenderness which hurried the swift though wearied feet of the Christ from Capharnaum to the slopes of the hill where stood the city of Naim the beautiful, just in time to meet the sad, slow procession bearing to the garden of sleep the only son of the widowed mother. Deep down in the heart of Christ were surging strange, strong emotions. Did He remember, then, the face of His own beloved Mother? Did He see her face, as so soon it would be, moist with the tears of her terrible grief, mourning over His own dead body, the cold, white clay of her own only and most Beloved Child. 'Weep not,' He whispered in tones of tender command and tender comfort. With quick stride He stood beside the bier and called, 'Young man, I say to thee, arise!' Then, ah! the delicate thought of His womanlike tenderness, He took the boy and gave him back to his mother. Yet there is one supreme proof of His tenderness, it is the proof of tears. How wildly the tide of His deepest feelings was stirred to tempest of sorrow when looking out over the doomed city He cried, in the agony of a spurned tenderness

and of a lost love, 'Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often I would have gathered thee as the hen gathereth her little ones under her wing, and thou wouldst not!' Yet one moment look upon His face as the big tears form and fall. Or, again, look upon His face when, as the weeping Magdalen reproaches Him that He had not come in time to save her brother, His lips tremble, His features quiver, His eyes are clouded till from them, through the long lashes, the purest and choicest heart-pearls of tenderness roll in swelling stream and fall upon the dead dust of the world's sin and sorrow.

Through the whole Gospel story we come upon alternating scenes which show with the vividness of actual fact that the womanlike traits of Christ's character in no way subdued or overshadowed the striking and almost startling evidences of His manliness. It is with a sense of solemn awe that we venture to approach the great Christ when the stronger and fiercer qualities of His human nature are let loose in terrifying although controlled storm. In His manner we notice a strange reserve and absolute independence of others even when He is most simple in His condescension or most tender in His kindness. 'He trusted Himself to no man,' nor had He need of any man. There was withal a majesty in His bearing and in His speech which made all who met Him bow in inward reverence and in outward respect, for not only did He speak as one having authority, but His very presence forced all men to recognise their Master. Thus even the Apostles, even Peter, often dared not ask Him the meaning of His words. Again, an outward reserve towards women was so remarkable and so unvarying in His conduct that His disciples

wondered when they found Him talking alone with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well. Small men need society, great men can do without it. Our Lord loved solitude. It is said that during His public life He never slept under a roof-tree, but always on the mountain or by the meadow or amidst the olives. This fact also illustrates the austereness of His self-control and the rigour of His own inward life; but it also casts a brilliant splendour on the simple mode and method of His outward way of acting, for as He lived like ordinary folk the mock saints of His time, the Pharisees, pretended to be shocked at His want of mortification and called Him 'a wine bibber, a glutton' and 'a friend of sinners.' Yet He was so absolutely irreproachable, so absolutely free from any slightest shadow, that could give an excuse for cunning, spite, or malignant calumny to disparage Him, that He was able, openly and fearlessly, to challenge the condemnation of His very enemies: 'Who amongst you can accuse Me of sin.' With regard to the inward qualities of Christ's character under its manly aspect, we will first consider those that betoken strength then those that betoken kindness. Strength of character includes decisiveness or the power of swift and unflinching decision. Notice the straight, direct, downright expression of full and final resoluteness: 'No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is worthy of the kingdom of God.' Or, again, His almost imperious refusal to dally with delay: 'Let the dead bury their dead.' Or again, His fierce indignation when Peter sought to stay His steps on the path that should lead to death: 'Begone Satan.' Or yet again, His brave, quick, unflinching decision to

leave the supper-room and go to Gethsemane: 'Arise, let us go hence.' To the decisiveness which begins in a great, strong, manly way corresponds the reliability which with staunch manliness up to the very end never fails. The great Christ could never forsake a friend, nor ever leave even the most unworthy child of Adam in the lurch. Not only is He the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine in order to seek for the one lost sheep, not only does He tenderly bear the wearied and wounded wanderer back upon His own shoulders, not only does He welcome the prodigal home with the full forgiveness and undiminished affection of a true father, not only does He multiply His pardon beyond seventy times seven, but He gave His own ideal of manly staunchness when He said: 'Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friend,' and this ideal He fulfilled in fact upon His Cross. In any man of really strong character there must be a great power of anger. The anger of Christ is sometimes so vehement as to surprise men into wonder while it startles them with a strange dread. Look at the knitted brows above the fierce fire that flashes from His eyes when He flogs the traffickers out of the Temple, driving them and the cattle in disordered rout and wild panic under the whirling hiss and stinging stroke of His angry lash. Listen to the rattling of the scattered coin as He flings the money on the marble floor. There were three things which our Lord would not brook, three things which, to put it in our human way, He could not stand—irreverence towards God, hypocrisy, and sloth. Thus, as He fiercely purified His Father's house when it had been made a den of thieves, so He showed

no patience towards the Pharisees. His contempt for their meanness, His scorn for their mock sanctity, His public exposure of their secret sinfulness were hurled against them wrathfully and ruthlessly in epithets which have branded their memory with a fury of fire and a sentence of shame : ' Generation of vipers ' ; ' Whitened sepulchres,' polished and painted forsooth without, but within full of creeping sins and rottenness of the tomb. Sloth also was hateful to Him. Of His manly love and admiration for the earnest worker we have frequent evidences. He could not bear that men should idly loiter when there was work in His vineyard to do. In the parable of the talents He proclaims His law of proportional gain for each God-given power. But we understand better His implacable sentence passed on sloth when we behold His kind face change to tempest, while from His tightened lips falls like a thunderbolt His imprecation, till the barren fig-tree scorched and shrivelled is blasted by the lightning of His curse. But terrible as was His indignation, and tempest-like as was His wrath against Pharisee, drone, or blasphemer, this aspect of His character is almost lost sight of when we turn to think of His kindness. Men may be great in one way or in another, even though they be not kind, but no man is a great man in the full sense of manliness unless he have those finer tones of character which make the masterful man merciful and the strong man kind. Strength without affection is cruel, and the moral power that has no gentleness of feeling is more akin to the ferocity of the tiger than to the humanity of a man. Really great men have always great hearts. Wherefore we naturally expect to find

that Christ is kind, and the more we meditate upon His life the more are our anticipations divinely surpassed. True kindness must have combined in equal and abundant measure the twin elements of large-mindedness and big-heartedness. How large-minded our Lord was even towards the worst sinners, the most degraded, the most obdurate, we behold with an overwhelming sense of wondering gratitude and of adoring tenderness when we see Him with the Magdalen, with Peter, with Judas, or with the thief upon the cross. This is revealed with mysterious pathos, yet in the simple accents of a deep heart that is strongly stirred, when the great Christ Himself tells the story of the prodigal son. Surely He was 'meek and humble of heart.' Surely 'His yoke is sweet and His burden light.' For listen to the cry that vibrates for ever from within His inmost soul: 'Come to Me all ye that labour and are heavy burdened.' Yea! His kindness outstrips all other kindness. Where no one else condemns He will not condemn. In whatsoever day thou shalt call upon Him He will pity thee. Even though a mother should forget her babe, yet He will never forget thee. Could our Lord be really human in the highest, fullest, and noblest, sense had He no human friendship? Cast not this thought indignantly aside as though it should suppose Christ to be less divine or less utterly impartial. There are two orders of things quite distinct, quite separate. In one order we consider only the worth, the dignity, the merit of a man, and in this order the crown or commonwealth should act with equal justice and with most even balance of impartiality towards everyone. But in another order of ideas and of

feelings, without the slightest interference with the first order of impartial justice and without infringing upon the rights or duties of absolute honour, he who wears the crown or he who guides the commonwealth may yet have his personal friends. They may not enter into the council hall; they may not hold the offices of State; should they be admitted to the banquet their place may be at the very door, but when the senators are silent and the guards have left the room friends may remain to share the conversation that is not about the State but about themselves, and to enjoy the favour that is not of the nation but of the home Some such friends of Christ were the impulsive Peter, the dear home of the brother and two sisters at Bethany, the innocent and affectionate John, the weeping and loving Magdalen. Our Lord seems to have been especially attracted by the early beauty of the child-soul that is still fresh and undimmed, and by the tarnished innocence that has been again renewed, washed, and purified with heart tears. Our Lord's love for His Mother is so sacred a theme that we dare not intrude with curious eye into this innermost shrine of His heart, where dwell His fondest affection and His most tender sympathy. Yet we may with devout reverence reflect that never had any mother a son that could compare with Him, nor ever had any son a mother like to His own darling Mother. He was indeed God, but He was also man, and as man He felt all the reverence and all the fondness which a most holy and loving child can feel for its mother. In the perfect character of Christ there was a most perfect fulfilment, in deep, real earnest, of the observance and of the spirit of the Fourth

Commandment. Besides, most highly favoured as she was by God and worthy to be venerated by the angel Gabriel, Mary must have been the most admirable and the most lovable of women. Furthermore, we must think of her as one well fitted in every noble way to understand the divine mission of her Son, to share in His exalted ideals, and to sympathise with His generous zeal. Thus, throughout all those dear though hidden years of His home life at Nazareth there must have been a gentle but uninterrupted and powerful drawing together of those two hearts into more close and affectionate intimacy, until their very lives thrilled and throbbed in sweet cadence and harmonious measure to the melody of the same song of soul. Surely, surely, never was any love so great, so noble, so deep, so fond, as the love which bound together these two hearts, the hearts of the Virgin-Mother and of her Divine Child.

You have read the story of our great yet gentle Christ and from it you may now perchance have learned to better understand His human character. Now leave the book and lift your eyes to look upon the Christ Himself. Gaze upon that picture as, seated upon the rough roots of the majestic oak, He listens to the poor people's plaints or prayers. Through the rich deep foliage of the stooping branches, the sunshine ripples in a moving glory to rest upon that kingly head from which the hood has fallen back, leaving the flowing folds and curling wavelets of His hair free to sparkle with the golden light and to answer to the prayerful breeze. Above, the untroubled blue of the heavens; beneath, the untarnished growth of the fresh green grasses; around, the fragrance of wild flowers and the incense of simple

hearts, the soft tones of the sheep bells that resound from the pasturage, and the divine music of human voices that echo the praise or petition of souls to the ear of the Good Shepherd. Look! that cripple who had been carried helpless and deformed to the feet of our merciful Master has jumped up and is bounding away with the speed of boyhood and with a shout of boyish glee. Now the blind man has turned round and you see his face transfigured with a rapture of vision and a glory of sunrise. Again, the poor old palsied woman, restored to the strength and symmetry of maidenhood, is kneeling before Him with her hands stretched out towards heaven, her eyes streaming with grateful tears, her voice broken with sobbing thanksgiving. But suddenly and swiftly a young woman darts through the crowd and throws herself at His feet. Her dress is gaudy with wild and wicked suggestiveness; but she is sobbing as though her heart would break and she is hiding her face with the folds of her long and loosened hair over the feet of the Christ. In a moment she feels the strange magnetism of His glance and she dares to lift her eyes to behold in the eyes of her Redeemer the heart-mists of His loving pardon. She hears a whispered message. Then, swiftly and suddenly she is gone, never to be recognised again, although some keen eye may perhaps have often wondered whether a quiet, modest figure, rarely seen in public, had not been seen before in very different garb. But, like a sudden thundercloud that darkens the heavens, a chill moves over the crowd. Through the silent and shuddering throng the feared but hated Pharisees pass. Sanctimonious, imperious, oppressive, with indignant rebuke for the cowering crowd, with

contemptuous sneer for the unostentatious Christ, they stand before Him. But the mocking curl fades from their lips, the fierce pride disappears from their glance, their pompous bearing bends and shivers when the Christ uprising confronts them. His face darkens with tempest of scorn ; His eyes seem to flash forth actual fire ; from His lips, like the terrible thunder of our weapons of war, are hurled the death-dealing words of the judgment of God. Terrified, humiliated, the Pharisees withdraw. A strange dread still hangs over the crowd ; but the little children, seizing their opportunity, rush in and flood round the Christ as He sits down again on the root of the oak. While He is listening to them and playing with them you can quietly draw near. Stand quite close to Him amongst the little children. Suddenly He looks straight at you. He is looking your very soul through and through. You cannot escape from that look. You understand it all now. That frank, simple, clear, innocent, human yet divine glance is telling you what you thought you knew, yet really never knew before. What is it that comes most home to you in the wonder of this revelation? He is so kind, so patient, so magnanimous, so merciful, so large-minded, so big-hearted ! Look ! there is something more. You see it in His eyes, for they reflect His heart ; it is the mysterious truth of His own unending and all-enduring love for your own poor, weak, and troubled self.

THE FACE OF CHRIST—A CONTEMPLATION

THE face is a mirror of the mind. It is an outward image of the inward man. It reflects in material line and curve and tone and colour the personal features of the soul. The mirror is sometimes dull; the image indistinct. Sometimes the shadows of the picture are so dark, the light so dim, the hues so faint, the lines so feebly or so delicately drawn, that we can only gather a vague impression of its character. Sometimes we can clearly see no more than a monotonous likeness of a meaningless life. Yet the mirror is there. It is sometimes so blank as to bear us no message, sometimes so mysterious as to bewilder us with its import. But clear or ambiguous, faint or emphatic, weak or wonderful, it is an outward evidence stamped upon its material counterpart by the kind of spirit that works within.

The tale of pain, of hardship, of sickness, or of want is told by the face. So too upon the face is written the record of grief, of anxiety, of disappointment, of loneliness, of bitterness, or of despair. Thus, again, we may read there the story of uneventful days of peace or the story of moral war; of fierce hours of spiritual struggle or of long years of gradual growth. Who has not seen faces that have been seamed and

blurred unto wilful likeness to the brute? Who has not beheld faces lit with the light of indwelling angels?

We must not push this truth too far. We may not always presume, from his countenance, to judge the worth of any man. The actual expression will indeed make manifest his actual meaning, and in so far will show his actual merit. But the habitual character which has moulded his features may be mistaken, either because disease of body or distress of mind has thrown shadow where there has been no sin, or because the will may have renewed the soul though the face still bears the marks of a troubled and tempestuous past.

Yet we know that the face may speak to the eye what no language could tell to the ear; and that it may flash forth a message too full and too clear to be ever rendered by the slow, cold, cumbersome eloquence of words.

When anger is lit within the soul its lightnings flash through the glance, its thunder-clouds gather upon the brow; the teeth are set, the lips tightly fastened, while the lines of cheek and chin are sharply and deeply drawn. When joy, the lines are rounded into dimpling curves, the furrows disappear, the brows are uplifted slightly, and the eyes full of near and rippling sunshine. When pain, the forehead is fretted like ridges of sea when a shallow tide is forsaking the sand; the lines of the face are straight yet less indented than when drawn by wrath, while within the wide eyes there comes a far-off look of weariness shadowed by drooping mists.

Now an expression that passes leaves yet some trace of its coming. That trace may disappear, like

the lines which the tide in retreating has left on the bare, broad sand. But if that expression, with constant recurrence renews, day after day, year after year, the seal of its own self, then, as waves write on rocks the message of the ocean, the plastic features become moulded under the impress or stroke of frequent emotion unto the habitual likeness of the habitual mind.

All this is more and more evidently marked in proportion as the thought is vivid and the character strong. Weak natures have faces as dreary as highways shut in between walls and as little expressiveness as a November sky. Fierce passion or fierce trial, like earthquake or tempest, leaves behind it traces of titanic upheaval or of titanic war. The victory may have been won by the spirit, in its death-struggle against the flesh, but the face, like the heart, bears the scars of battle, although its beauty is none the less admirable because it is that of the warrior rather than of the maid.

But, after all, however much or little we may learn from the crowd of faces which pass through any street of any town, we may amongst them sometimes meet one face that is a revelation. A stranger to us before, yet at once in that one look we know that life. No proof could be so plain. It is not a reasoning but an intuition. It is no message sent by speech or sign or symbol. It is a lifting of the cloud of clay which shrouds the presence of a spirit. It is the apparition of a soul. One moment, one look, one flash of thought, then the face is gone, but we in many and meditative ways unfold the story that it spoke: a high ideal simply and nobly followed out; a mind clear with the insight of innocence, truthful as a

mirror that has no flaw nor blur, yet broadly human as an old man's after-thought; a will chivalrous as a dream of knighthood, resolute in combat as the grasp of a soldier, yet gentle in courtesy as the touch of a maiden; a heart tender as a mother's memory, pure as a child's tear. Have you ever beheld a face chiselled and toned to curve and colour of perfect human beauty, elevated by habitual character to become less human in expression than angelic, transfused in every varying phase of instant thought or instant feeling so as to be a mirror made of what is fairest upon earth, and glorified to become the visible eloquence of a noble soul? If you have seen it you will have paused, first in awe, then you will have bent in worship.

Pause now in prayerful recollection before you contemplate the face of Christ. He is God. Within that Presence dwells the dread reality which from for ever to for ever is outside all time, beyond all space, beneath all fact, above all truth, the eternal, all-pervading, all-powerful, all-knowing God. Wherefore with awe and sacred terror pause before you gaze upon the shrine of clay which He has lifted up to be the living tabernacle of His uncreated Word. Remember the while that He is truly Man. It is no phantom form, no visionary shape, no unsubstantial image, no dream, no mere ideal. He is Man as truly as thou art, with human thoughts thrilling through His brain, with human blood throbbing through His heart, with human love outlooking through His eyes. With deep reverence, then, but with deep feeling too, look upon the human face of Christ.

Come in spirit to Nazareth. But first reflect that

the life of Christ is no dead fact. It is no fact which long since faded from this actual earth and is now real no more except as a name embalmed in history or as a motive still present within the minds of men. Christ is a living fact. He lives not merely in His real drawing towards Himself of all the eyes of men; not merely in His real working within their lives of actual result; not merely in His intellectual influence or moral power; not merely in His real ransom sent straight each instant from His hand to buy souls back from bondage to the freedom of the sons of God; not merely in His Resurrection, by which He truly lives in heaven now, the very Man Who lived at Nazareth; but Christ is also fact, His life is also real, in this, that upon His actual reality rests, as upon the root that gives it fixedness, the stem that gives it sap, the brain that gives it impulse, and the heart that gives it blood, the actual reality of each Christian soul. Not your own birth, no! nor any other fact of your existence since then till now but leans, for whatever truth is in it, upon the truth of Christ. 'If Christ be not risen, then is our faith in vain.' If Christ be not a fact, then is our life unreal, our hope phantom, and our faith false.

Wherefore to go in spirit back to the time when Jesus lived His mortal years, and in thought to stand upon the spot hallowed by His footstep, is not to dally with idle dreams or play with foolish fancies, but it is to recognise that neither time nor space can come between us and our Christ; it is to withdraw from empty accidents of changing cloud and crumbling clay in order to enter into the truer world of soul, there to dwell with realities that abide.

In spirit, then, come to Nazareth, and look upon the face of the Divine Boy, as in His tenth or twelfth summer, returning about sundown from His work, He may have paused upon the threshold of His home to meet with uplifted gaze His Mother's welcome.

Look! Never before nor ever since was countenance of man so beautiful. Above the broad and noble brow, typical even in childhood of high and thoughtful wisdom, uprose the bright curling waves of hair which, parting, fell in rippling cataract of iridescent sunlight, circling the young yet stately head with moving sheen and shadow, then flowed about His shoulders in sparkling spray and spreading stream. Yes! a very Son of David, not with dark locks like David's children, but like David's self with strange tresses of living gold. The oval line of the cheek, thin but not hollow, meets the strong yet kind curves of the chin. The mouth—small, resolute, ideal, with lips of immaterial mould and meaning—now slightly parted in expectation and wreathed into the first dawning of a quiet smile. Above the mouth the nostrils, chiselled as in marble, undulating in breathing grace. The skin, olive-tinted with the warm glow of southern skies, yet almost transparent in its pearl-like purity as through it is reflected upon the cheek a fairer red than Sharon's roses ever knew. The whole head poised with precise symmetry and set with full-throated power upon shoulders of firm and manly promise. But the eyes! Beneath the dark, arched eyebrows, from between the dark, long lashes, His heart, His soul, His very Godhead looked. Within those mysterious depths of unutterable feeling, within those mysterious springs of eloquent emotion, such

varying phase of silent thought or speaking splendour, of shadowed pain or tender brightness, of stern warning or loving comfort, of divine rebuke or human sympathy, waxed or waned, or ebbed or flooded, or flashed or faded, that men, absorbed by their meaning and enraptured by their radiance, could not tell their colour. For in their joy they seemed to smile with the clear, bright blue seen through rain-clouds that have dried their tears and pass away in peace. But in their indignation their fire flashed from depths of darkness like a night-storm lit by lightning—a tempest made still more terrible by sudden and vivid splendour. Or in their sadness they look like lustrous brown, as when autumnal shades of life have touched its brightness with meditative mood of quiet melancholy; or like eyes that turn towards some distant memory of dead days; or like eyes that are weary with waiting for hopes that linger so long in their coming as to mingle with mists or vanish with dreams. Still in their sympathy so sweet a smile, so kind a warmth, made manifest their message that all thought of colour disappeared, abashed by the revelation of a love and by the rapture of a loveliness innocent as an angel's ecstasy yet beautiful as a maiden's blush, adorable as God yet human as a heart.

If ever, then, fair sight or tender tone of earth should so fascinate your thought as to draw your soul away from the loveliness of heaven; if ever fond charms of clay should so bewitch your fancy and beguile your heart as to dull and chill within you all human hope of human happiness other than that which is unhallowed; if ever the falsehood of Satan or the foolishness of sense should tempt you to think

that beauty, as well as pleasure, is on the side of sin, and that all enchantment of sight, all enthusiasm of sound, and all rapture of emotion must be forsworn once you turn an earnest gaze towards the Revelation of the Spirit; if ever, what is lovable in Nature is taken to be antagonistic to what is admirable in grace, then, child, look upon the loveliness of the face of the Child-God. Oh, when tempted by beauty that wears the mask of sin look upon the beauty of the face of Christ!

The thought of beauty is doubly dangerous; dangerous lest it be forsworn, and dangerous lest it be forced too far.

If, on the one hand, from fear of evil fascinations we do not loyally and to the full admit that beauty is truly admirable and truly good we are guilty of seeking spiritual help from falsehood. But when once there is such secret and traitorous compact against truth the soul is never safe. Whatever is beautiful is, according to Plato's definition, accepted and endorsed by the great St. Augustine, 'the splendour of what is true,' and therefore the very glory of what is good. Hence an asceticism which denies the truth or good of beauty admits a principle that is untrue, and adopts a system that is unsound. But this is absolutely irrational. No wonder, then, that in practice it should prove most perilous. For, as it gives over all the attractions of earth to the enemy, it is left without brightness and without buoyancy. It takes to itself as its only right all the dreariness as well as the drudgery, all the hopelessness as well as the hardship, all the sourness as well as the sacrifice of life. Easily, then, in a moment of sudden flood of sensuous feeling

the barriers of this dismal doctrine, built of unhealthy reasoning and based upon unnatural principle, fail to stem the tide of passionate impulse that is fretted by falsehood and fanned by foolishness, until, sweeping good and evil together in uncontrollable riot and devastating deluge, the wild torrent bursts forth to foul and fatal extreme.

Truth is the only foundation on which a solid holiness can stand. Frankly, then, recognise that all things are good, that what is best is beautiful, and that what is most beautiful is most lovable. Thus will you, with wide eyes of wonder, behold God's loveliness mirrored upon the faces of Nature's fairest children, and thus will you, with happy heart, worship Him Whose ideal beauty, even when only reflected from earthen images, haunts you evermore with the vague yearning of an infinite need. Thus shall you despise and conquer those suggestions of sense that are mere brutal misrepresentations of loveliness, for your fancy will be illumined by a brighter beauty and your heart hallowed by a nobler love.

Still, even when beauty is true and the love of it blameless, there is, alas! danger. There is peril of another kind. The soldier may admire, but he must not too far follow, Art. The hand well taught to wield the pencil becomes unsuited to grasp the sword. The soul subdued by sweet sound, or enamoured of the ideal forms that live in poet's dreams, cannot be counted on in time of sudden and supreme crisis for the vigilance that safeguards the camp, or for the fierceness that triumphs in the rage of battle and in the roar of war. So we soldiers still must not tarry by the meadow or by the stream when our right place is on the hill or

in the trench. We must not forget that we only pass through the pleasant sights and sounds of earth as pilgrim-warriors whose face is ever fixed upon the horizon and whose hand is ever on the sword.

Wherefore, as we have looked upon the beauty of the face of Christ in order to learn the truth of loveliness and the sacredness of its message, so, in order to understand both the duty of stern reserve towards charms that lead to wrong and the dignity of sorrow and of sacrifice which can give to penitent souls a beauty more admirable than that of untried and untroubled innocence, behold now the face of Christ as He looks upon the sinner.

When the long weary years of monotonous waiting at Nazareth had slowly ended, and when the short time of His public life, crowded with revelations in work and word of the human mercy of the Son of God had quickly passed, the hour of our Saviour's most blessed Passion came. In the garden of Gethsemane He lay crushed to the earth in a death-struggle with fear, shame, and grief. But a sound, slight first and distant, broke in upon the stillness and loneliness of His agony. Then with louder and louder din and discord it grew into the noise of a nearing rabble, until it thundered about Him with the roar of savage storm. Jesus arose. He stands before Judas. A sudden silence, intense with the strain of pent-up passion, terrible with the threat of an outburst, appalling with the horror of an impending doom, falls upon the crowd. In the unnatural hush of the instant, the deep quiet of the night, with the strange contrast of its sacred repose rebuking the sinful clamour of the mob, seemed full of awful meaning. None dared speak.

Transfixed they gazed. Before them a background of olive-trees with deep, dark, mysterious recesses—solemn, gloomy, stern; before them an open space of sward, gleaming with vivid splendour, for from above the light of the full paschal moon, flitting with ghostlike radiance and ghostlike silence, shrouded the spectral figures of the scene in weird white or draped them in weird shadow; before them, in the midst, in the moonlight, like an apparition, a tall motionless figure and the pale face of the Christ. About His head His hair, disordered now, rises in living halo where the light rests upon it; but, where His own blood has moistened it, hangs in heavy crimson braids. How changed that face! Upon it, white, worn, with deep-drawn lines of pain that quiver in sharp, tight throbs, is written His agony. The face of one dying, yet the pallor of cheek and brow is stained with strange, large, beaded drops, like tears, that form, then fall, but blood red. Oh, if only Judas had seen this face before! If only in his dreams; before he had bartered away the blood of God; before he had sat at the Last Supper; before he had gone forth to lead this maddened and brutal multitude; before this last instant of horror, of despair, when he thinks it is too late to turn back; if only, were it but in his dreams, Judas had seen that face before he would not be here now—a traitor, a murderer. It is like the face of the dead, yet it is still the mirror of a heart that lives to love. Behold that look! Read the last message of that heart! What strange gentleness of reproach—not contempt, not anger, not even indignation, but a wild wide wave of unutterable yearning that is dashed back by hopeless loss; a sorrow dark

and inconsolable yet a pity deep and enduring; a devotedness that is despised, a great-heartedness that is met by meanness, a tenderness that is spurned with coarse insult, a heart broken with disappointment, a love that is betrayed!

And you! Oh, when your hour of temptation comes, before you enter on the downward path that leads to the precipice, before you begin to weave with little strands of constant sin those cable bonds that bind men to despair, before you betray Him Who loves you, oh! before it is too late, look upon the pale and agonising face of Jesus before Judas kissed Him. When tempted, look upon the face of Christ!

While the shrill crowing of the cock was still echoing in his ears Peter passed by an open balcony of the High Priest's house, and, moved by the magnetism of eyes fixed upon him, looking up met, just a little above him and so close as to be almost within reach, the gaze of his Redeemer. Peter stood there, held fast by that gaze—motionless, speechless, breathless, paralysed. He could not stir. He could not think. He felt benumbed, cold as death, his brain reeling, his throat choking, a pain in his heart as though a knife had pierced it. He could only look straight into those eyes which looked straight into his own, scrutinising his very soul. What did those eyes say to him? Something, doubtless, such as this:

'O Peter! Peter! Mine own chosen Apostle! Out of all My chosen friends, chosen to be Mine own other self, the oracle of My truth, the corner-stone of My Church, the holder of the keys of earth and heaven, My angel of peace to men, My crown, My glory in the

sight of the happy spirits. With oaths thou didst swear to be true to Me unto death, Peter! Yet at the mere mocking of a foolish maid thou didst deny Me! Denied! I am denied by Peter. Peter has sworn with oaths that he did not even know Me! In My agony, in My loneliness, in My shame, I looked for a friend, for one who would share My sorrows, for one who would stand by Me. I looked for Peter. Judas—yes! But Peter? Oh, how I loved thee! How I do love thee still! Come back! Come back! Dost thou not love Me yet a little? Wilt thou not recognise Me now that there is no one near to watch or mock thee? Peter! Peter! Thou hast fallen, terribly, terribly fallen. Thou hast denied Me, thy friend, thy Redeemer, thy God. But I want thee, for I love thee still. Come that I may forgive thee! Peter come back to Me!'

Through those wide mournful eyes, moist and soft with heart-mists, the love of Christ looked upon Peter. With such strange sadness of reproach His love looked through His eyes; with such mute appeal of friendship; with such pain yet with such gentleness; with such clear, uncompromising denunciation of his guilt yet with such mother-like yearning for his return that the very heart of Peter rocked within him. A wild tumult of sorrow shook his whole frame with paroxysms of choking sobs. Such tide of grief burst from his eyes in tempest-tears that the very barriers which stemmed their flood were swept away and, for ever after, while he lived, the constant stream of constant sorrow flowed in sad salt waves that wore themselves wide channels down his cheeks.

And thou! O sinner, whom Christ yet loves

with such deep warmth of pity, with such unwearied watchfulness, with such unbounded tenderness, as never kindest mother loved her sick babe, look! Meet those eyes that looked at Peter as they look into your own soul. Meet the sad silent gaze of your Redeemer. Oh, when you have fallen look into the face of Christ!

Many of the Fathers of the Church, explaining those words of Christ, 'it is expedient for you that I should go,' tell us how hard it was to wean the Apostles from thoughts too human, and how needful, therefore, that no longer looking upon the human face of Christ they might be more easily taught to contemplate His Godhead.

This teaching, as almost always happens when principles that are of fine and delicate application pass through narrow minds, has been warped by bitter and shallow ascetics to a meaning which is absolutely false. These prophets of heartlessness speak of our Redeemer as though His manhood were a myth, His heart unfeeling, all human thought of Him dangerous, and all human affection for Him wrong. This not one of the Fathers ever taught. This has been most practically and most plainly anathematised by the Church. This is an insult to Christian devotedness and a wound to Christian feeling.

The first and direct meaning of our Lord's words is that which He Himself gave: 'If I do not go, the Paraclete will not come.' The reason for this our Lord did not give, nor can we do more than accept the fact on His authority.

A second meaning is drawn by the Fathers of whom I spoke from the danger to the Apostles of clinging to

the Jewish ideal of a temporal triumph, and to the Jewish hope of a king who should make Jerusalem even greater than Rome, mistress of the nations, queen unconquered, unrivalled, unfailing, of the entire earth. The Apostles were still dazzled by this ideal and still haunted by this hope. As long as our Lord was with them the majesty of His presence, the magnetism of His words, and the marvels of His working made it hard for them to think that His kingdom was not of this world. His loss would leave them more alone with the spirit of His mission. It would not make their love for Him less human, but it would make it more divine.

This suggests another reason. The Apostles knew that Christ was really man. They had not so fully realised that He was also God. While they could see Him and speak with Him, the truth of His human nature came home to their hearts at every moment and in every way. When He left them there was room for more keen and more constant thought of the truth of His divinity.

With us this is all reversed. The ancient Jew believed in mere material and worldly success. The modern Jansenist makes a profession of exclusive asceticism. The Jew was unangelic. The Jansenist is inhuman. The Jew was without soul. The Jansenist is without heart. Both errors lead inevitably to the same end, to the same evil, to the same sin. But they start from opposite extremes, and must therefore be encountered on different ground. We have not to deal with the old Pharisee but with the new. Our danger is not lest our faith in Christ's Godhead fail, but in forgetfulness of His manhood.

Our help is in the knowledge that He has a heart. Christians, if indeed they be Christians at all, realise now that Christ is God. But the time of His mortal life is now so long gone by, and the traces of His human character so faint and far, that, although we dare not deny it, yet the fact of His real manhood does not come home to us in a very real way. Hence, from this point of view, were He now living upon earth there would be far greater reason why He should still dwell amongst us than that He should depart.

But as to the underlying principle, the real point at issue between Jansenist and Catholic, whether a human love for Christ be holy or whether it be better to love Him only with a spiritual love, there can be no room for doubt. The proud prophets of heartless holiness have been explicitly condemned by Pope Benedict XIII. They have always been practically recognised as Pharisees by the quick and accurate instinct of the faithful. They are in open opposition to the plainest lessons of the Gospel. When St. John rested his head upon our Redeemer's heart the sign, the token, the proof was not of mere cold devotedness of mind and will, but of warm, tender affection and of true, deep human feeling.

Wherefore, not only must we love the Lord our God with our whole heart as well as with our whole soul, but, furthermore, since out of His divine love God took unto Himself a human heart in order to love us also with a human love, so our love for Him should combine both the spiritual adoration of a creature for its Creator and the throbbing sympathy of friend for friend.

Our first and chief conclusion, then, must be that

Christianity is not cynicism, nor is holiness heartless. Nature is not accursed, nor to be killed, but by Grace to be ennobled and consecrated. All that is true and good in man is both blessed and intensified when to him is given the gift of supernatural life. Hence our heart-worship for our incarnate God should be both thoroughly human and thoroughly divine.

Our second conclusion explains that Nature must submit to Grace. The soundness of this statement is evident to common sense, but it may be easily exaggerated and its exaggeration is the cause of much unhappiness and the occasion of much sin in spiritual life. In the sophisms of Pharisees, ancient or modern, there is enough truth to catch and enough falsehood to disconcert the minds of the simple. In their advice there is enough piety to attract and enough pride to estrange the fervour of the good. Men are easily misled, and their own weakness makes them ready to worship what appears to be strength. Thus, harshness is mistaken for holiness, and severity in direction is a short cut to a reputation for sanctity. Hence Christ was no saint for the Pharisee. The Jansenist 'is not like the rest of men.' To himself his creed is no inconvenience, for he is heartless by nature and cruel by choice. He can count on making victims. He terrifies some into submission by exaggerated severity. He allures others into obedience by exaggerated sacrifice. Now we prefer our meek, humble, and loving Christ to the harsh, proud, implacable Pharisee. We must, then, winnow the true from the false. We must scatter the chaff and keep the good grain.

Understand, then, this other lesson of our Lord:

Nature must yield to Grace. It is a lesson on which the Fathers all insist, as indeed do all wise and good men. It is a lesson, furthermore, which embodies in its right shape and accurate place the atom of truth that is turned by brainless and bloodless ascetics into a thorn to tease, into a scruple to torture simple and unsuspecting souls. The lesson is that Grace not Nature is the standard of Christian sanctity; that all human good is hallowed as a help towards what is Godlike; that nothing human is good if it bar or check our steps towards God; and that during the days of our pilgrimage we may only hold what earthly gifts we have, so as to be ready bravely to leave them or patiently bear their loss. The Christian must willingly take up his cross even though it bring a death-wound to his heart. There is no affection free from trial, no friendship secure from separation. We may not rest peacefully on any hope, or lean happily on any love, however sacred it be, as though it were exempt from the universal law of sacrifice. Death, at least, severs the ties that have withstood the strain of life. Thus the last word of all love is 'Good-bye!' O Christian soul! in the supreme hour of thy sacrifice, when thy heart is dead, look upon the dead face of Christ!

She who had borne Him as a babe in her arms, His Mother, now holds His head upon her knee. Oh, how she had longed for His return since He first left her home! How she had yearned for the revelation of His voice, for the rapture of His presence! Now He is given back to her; she holds His head upon her knee. But He is dead! His face is fixed, expressionless, white, cold. His mortal voice is silent for

ever. His eyes, in their mortal pain, in the human anguish of their sympathy, are for ever closed. Draw near! Draw near to contemplate the dead Christ! That lifeless body is still joined to the Person of the Word. Adore It then! It is indeed clay, but It is also God. He cannot hear you now, nor can His eyes read your soul. With all reverence, then, yet with closer and more courageous scrutiny, scan those features unequalled ever amongst men.

The hair is tangled and matted, almost solid towards the roots with dry blood-red folds, rising in parts to lighter shade of crimson, but only here and there a few locks still left with their own golden hue untarnished. Round the brows the purple tracks of the thorns—deep, dark, cruel, with rent and swollen edge. The features scarred still and bruised, even though His Mother's hand had washed away the blood and stains of insult. His closed eyes are wreathed with their long dark lashes as with funeral fringe. Yet, through crimson wound or purple bruise, through deep dent or tight track of agony, how beautiful that face!

As a rare block of marble chosen with eager solicitude and carried from afar with anxious watchfulness, then set within the shrine of Art, answers with shapely form and delicate curve and tender moulding to every inspired touch or heart-taught movement of the master's hand, realising in the world of fact, by a strange wonder of creation, the type that dwelt within the world of fancy, growing day by day, as vague child-features gradually unfold the maturer character of its race, unto the likeness of its mother-thought, reflecting with more and more subtle precision, each instant, with more and more feeling sympathy, the

beloved image born within the brain and nurtured within the heart, until, at last, it stands cold, mute, passionless, indeed, but with such living meaning breathing through it, that, as you gaze and gaze, it now grows into your own soul, reproducing there its own ideal, showing you lines of beauty that your yearning had vainly sought for, and giving to your actual contemplation what you had longed for and loved, yet never known; so, that most sacred clay which is the dead body of our Lord, had been gathered from the heart of the most pure and beautiful Maiden earth ever saw, chiselled by the spiritual bidding of the adorable artist God, unto the realisation of His own ideal-Christ, until, with an excellence unknown to angel, with a charm unimaginable to man, a most perfect human mirror of a most perfect human soul, lifted up to living union with the all-perfect Word, it held the eye and entranced the thought, astonished and reposed the heart, elevated and sustained the spirit by the divine revelation and human rapture of the beauty of the face of Christ.

Let that face haunt you evermore. Let its beauty sweetly win your soul away from charms that are false or soiled with sin to a loveliness that has no flaw, no stain, no blemish, no defect. Let its mute reproach warn you back in temptation, lest you rashly stray towards lower levels that lead to final treason against your kingly Christ. Let its most sorrowful mercy loose the flood-gates of your tears when you have fallen, chastising you with its wounded pity yet soothing you with its magnanimous comfort. Let its death-pallor and the lifeless marks of its agony tell you, with the eloquence of white cheek and blood-

less clay, how much He loved you Who did give His life for you, and how much you must lean upon His love in the hour of your heart-break.

Oh, let that face haunt you evermore! Let it look upon you all the day long, meeting with varying expression every fact that shapes your outward circumstance, every impulse that stirs your inward soul. Let it teach you with the clear, silent truthfulness of its gaze. Let it dispel your doubts with the meaning of its divine vocation, and lighten your difficulties with the message of its human love. Let it bend over you in your slumber, as kind mother stoops with radiant joy over her slumbering child. Let it still mingle with your dreams, making them pure as a spring morning, calm as a summer night. Let it haunt you evermore with gentleness, with mercy, with forgiveness, with eager pleading, and with yearning love, until at last one night you sleep a deep, calm, peaceful, happy sleep and awaken to look with unending and infinite ecstasy upon the unveiled beauty of the face of God!

'AND JESUS WEPT'

And Jesus wept.—Luke xix. 41

BEYOND the narrow range of sense, above the changeful shiftings of the world, beneath the vast reality of which we are a part, there is a dread power, a force, origin of all other force: a law, source of all order; a necessity—immense, eternal, resistless, fathomless. Terrible from the subtility of its presence, from the extent of its dominion, from the absoluteness of its potency, the Will whose *fiat*, when there was nothing, made all things to be, cannot but overwhelm all serious thought with the consciousness of an abyss between us and the Being in whose hand we are.

The awfulness and distance of God are further heightened by the feebleness and hopelessness of man. With all the terrible responsibility of a spirit, with all the terrible earthiness of a brute, without the serene immateriality of an angel, without the instinctive observance of animal measure, man is a centre where meet what is least noble yet most aspiring in the higher world, and what is least blind yet most corruptible in the world beneath. Matter and Soul, and of these two united in one life—Man. One life, yet with what conflicting currents, with what discordant impulses, with what jarring needs! One life, of parts so deftly blended that earth is made closely to minister to

thought and will, while spirit controls and shares its breathing being with thick particles of clay. One life, of parts so delicately harmonised that they can show all creation's loveliness and worth. Yet, withal, without God's wonder-working grace these parts must naturally tend to wrench towards opposing spheres the unhinged action of the whole. There can be no peace, no order, no good or healthful life unless the inferior bend in self-denying duty to serve only a higher end. Such submission Nature cannot give. Nature alone sends war, and turmoil, and horror, and weakness, and guilt.

None the less man, this miserable being, must be saved by the choice of his own free will, or not at all. God cannot save free souls against their will, or without their will, otherwise than by turning them into blind, driven things, and thus sacrificing all the merit of their work as well as all the praise and honour which echo through the universe the glory of His Name.

A creature so low, so abject, yet capable of loving God! So forceless, yet free arbiter of its eternity! So contemptible, yet to be dealt with reverently by infinite Majesty! O man! what a weird wonder art thou of dignity and of wretchedness!

So pitiable an object was well suited to draw towards it the mercy of the All-Bountiful. But how shall this be? Shall God, remaining in the unapproachable height of His beatitude, vouchsafe to send to tear-distracted mortals the kindly succour of His power? No! He comes not by His power alone, but in person; He will annihilate by an infinite act of love the infinite distance between Himself and those whom He would help. The Incarnation was

decreed. Now the Incarnation means this: that our God becomes our Emmanuel—God with us. God is man, man like us, of our own race, and of our own blood. He becomes man that He may speak to us with a human voice, teach us in human language, win us with human affection, feel for us with a human heart. For the changeless and cloudless happiness of the infinite, though it might help, could not share our sorrows, and so could not win the swiftest and gentlest entry to our inmost sympathies. Wherefore the Word was made flesh that God might weep.

The Incarnation is a message to our spiritual mind and to our spiritual will; but, most of all, is it a most graceful message to what within us is feeblest, while fitted most to show forth the loveliness of moral good.

The Incarnation is the centre, and in its mystical counterpart the organic promulgation of a whole system of truths. Yet the doctrines necessary to be known are not too burthensome for the memory of a child.

The Incarnation is also the most admirable of God's works, and so must claim the praise and homage of angelic wills. Yet the infinite splendours of the divine essence of themselves deserve infinitely more than all the worship of infinite worlds.

What is peculiar to the Incarnation, and what makes of it the masterpiece of love and wisdom, is that it is the Word made flesh—that is to say, God thinking of us with a human mind and loving us with a human heart. Thus is Jesus Christ our ideal—everything to us. Man—He wins us by tenderness throbbing in heart-pulsations and redeems us by sorrow heart-breaking. God—He upholds us with the awful mightiness which is His and will crown us

with the exhaustless raptures of His own loveliness and bliss. Wherefore the merciful condescension of the Incarnation shall have the victorious power of winning man to God—it shall have filled up an abyss of terror, and distance, and infinite estrangement, when hope, confidence, and friendship shall have been based on the securest proof of the affection of our Saviour. What shall the proof be? Oh! it must be a proof that He understands us intimately, that He takes part with us devotedly. There must be human experience and human feeling in the message which shall thoroughly thrill through the heart of man. It must be a proof of sorrow and a proof of sympathy, if it is to reach us ever. It must be the purest, gentlest, sweetest, tenderest, most earnest language in which a heart can overflow. It must be the proof of tears. Wherefore, 'the Word was made flesh, that God might weep.' 'And Jesus wept.'

'The first voice which I uttered was crying, as all others do,' sayeth the wise man. Man begins life with a wail and ends it with a groan; and between the first sobbing of consciousness and the first stiffening of a corpse what pains and pangs convulse that poor thing which we call man! crushing out through swelling eyelids the watery pearls formed of purest heart-blood, and flinging them out over quivering cheeks down to the cold, callous, pitiless ground. Over the fruit-like cheeks of infancy or over the rugged wrinkles of age; over the wan and sear features of want or over the loveliest bloom with a transparent radiancy of Paradise breathing through it—over them all alike come the rude tears. Tears of childhood, more real than its joys; tears of youth or maidenhood, maybe

but a shower which shall pass away for a while, or maybe the opening drops of a desolate life of grief. Weak tears of age, or terrible tears, only by torture wrung out of the sturdy strength of man. Tears that rush quickly forth; tears that roll silently and stealthily down; tears that lessen the depth of sorrow, or the horrible cruel tears that burning will not fall, but rush back with fierce bitterness to the heart, burning it too with drops as of fire, and heaping on it encrusted woe till it break. Tears! tears! who does not know what they are?

Tears, when not the meaningless result of mechanical effort, are pressed forth from the eyes in the strain of bodily suffering, or they are the stream of rain which sympathetically pours through the most delicate outlet of our feelings when sorrow clouds our soul. What we sometimes call tears of joy are only love's fresh dewdrops, which a sudden comfort breathing on feelings parched with sorrow gathers upon them, reviving thus a drooping soul with softening heart-mists that otherwise could not fall. Tears, what are they? It was asked of the great St. Augustine, who had known the poisonous tears of unholy affection, and the soul-cleansing tears of repentance, and the pure pearl tears through whose exquisite yearning at absence shines brightly love's rapturous trust in God's love. And Augustine, with deep thought of what he had felt, and with still deeper heart-knowledge of his mother, St. Monica, whose life of tears had flowed to save his love and his soul, Augustine, most tearful one time of sinners, and then most tearful of saints, Augustine made answer, 'Tears are the blood of a heart pierced with grief.'

Now, whether it be caused by racking attack of sickness, or by sharp, stinging wound, or by the weary wasting of disease, or by the endless discomforts and accidents which harass human life, there is not truly in the world any lack of physical pain, and in all this the soul must have a share. But beyond this the more delicate faculties of our being have in their own moral world other and wider realms of yet acuter pain. Within we have enthusiastic ideals and craven shortcomings, resolutions of steel and works of straw, dreams of vanity and selfish deeds, thought clouded by wilful weakness and will misshapen by narrow falsehood, mind obedient to wish, wish the slave of sense, and sense blindly blundering amidst phantoms, and idols, and sins. Without, what do we oftenest meet without when we despairingly seek for support and aid? The stare of coldness, the angry repulse of shocked strangeness, mockery with an echo in it of satanic laughter, ingratitude if not treachery, silence if not deceit, hope denied, kindness lost or slighted, cruelty consciously, or perhaps unconsciously, with demure and tranquil look, industriously and scrupulously in every way, stabbing to the veriest quick the most shrinking nerves of our soul.

Is this human life? Is it true that 'man, born of woman, liveth only a short time and is yet filled with many miseries?' All woes do not, of a truth, embitter every life, but the life that knows not many sorrows is not one of the children who in Adam sinned.

But all woes do exercise the human race, so that were their tears to meet in one salt stream, the bitter waters would appal with pity any heart not fixed

in hatred deep as hell. Sometimes, indeed, an individual life is bright and sparkling, just as some few tiny diamonds may be found in the huge mass of the earth, but the constant existence of humanity, as one generation after another is born, and weeps, and dies, is not an existence such as dreamers fancy, but a gathering and crumbling of clay.

This is so true that poetry, the articulate speech of feeling, in its highest flight is tragic; and music, the dumb language of emotion, in its most touching mood is solemn and sad. It is like the dirge of Eve, as in bitterness she remembered the glories of Eden; like the plaint of David over Absalom; or like the cry of Hagar mingling her desolation with the brooding blasts of the desert; or like the song of the Jewish maiden by the waters of Babylon; or like the patriarchal hymns wearily chanting their long-delayed hope; or like the dolorous tone of children full of the grief of the Mother of Jesus; for the sighs of the human race are echoed ever in the thrill of its plaintive melodies. It is only a masterly skill and talent that can save harmonious expression of joy from becoming vulgar and boisterous to the cultured ear, while in order to give sweet utterance to sigh or sob or melancholy infinite graceful tones may be found. Mirthful music ever borders on a giddy noise; the music of sorrow enraptures the ear and gently wakes far echoes of the heart. 'Twould seem as though, while Eve's sad children wander through this vale of tears, they must most love to hear the melodies which harmonise with the mourning and weeping of their pilgrimage, which swell in wild regret for the home of happiness which their first father lost, which sink in wailing anguish at

the heart-struggle of their exile, or which, betimes, in solemn awe dream wistfully of the glorious awakening which may yet come, when, gathered within an eternal home in the bosom of God, they shall behold the second Eve, most noble lady, maiden fairest and best, one time mother of Dolours, now most glorious queen ever bright with the fulness of peace, when, too, they shall meet her Son, the Beautiful, Who did die for them, and even He shall not weep any more.

It is, indeed, true that music to be sublime need not be the expression of actual thoughts like these, but it must be the expression of a longing and unutterable heart-thirst which in such realities alone can find contentment and true repose.

Alas! it is sadness ever and aye; sadness—a perpetual death-song quivering forth into utterance its mournful modulations; sadness—a living elegy of the ebb and flow of feeling, like phantom memories that arise from the grave of love buried, or like forlorn chanting of the waves by the shore of a midnight sea. Hope and trust may, and do, thank God! comfort and strengthen our souls, yet even they cannot do more than bring patience to the aching heart of humanity and brush away the tears that start ever freshly again.

Could he then know what man is who never had shed a tear?

Now, if anyone ever felt the full bitterness of human sorrow it was the Man Who, truest and noblest of all, was yet, of all, saddest and pre-eminently the Man of Sorrows. Wherefore St. Paul, whose heart was as thoroughly human as it was thoroughly holy, overwhelmed with the trustfulness due to so majestic

a love, stooping for our sakes to the rough experience of fellowship in trial, exclaims: 'We have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin!' Truly the most delicate fibres of the Sacred Heart had vibrated to the gentlest emotions and to the harshest strokes which lightly touch or rudely rend our sympathies, and He it is Who asks us to put our trust in Him. His birth and infancy had given Him the commonest and dullest crosses of human life, and these He had borne not with the half-unconscious wailings of unawakened reason, but with the shocked appreciation of maturity. Even from the first moment, too, He had allowed His heart to throb with quick pulsations such as angels cannot feel. As His maid-Mother held Him in her arms her life was still so young that she could feel for Him, not only the adoring devotion of a creature and the full torrent of mother's love, but also, in a delicately noble sense, the familiar fondness of a sister. To all this He answered with an intensity of sympathy such as can only come from the finer feelings of exquisite souls, and thus was His heart prepared to shrink with acuter anguish under the harshest wounds. What must He have felt when He bade her 'Good-bye' and left her home for ever! What, when He caught a glimpse of her face as He was being dragged up to Calvary, and she was thrust back away from Him by the rude soldiery! What, when their eyes met as His heart was breaking on the Cross, while His Mother's heart was pierced with anguish as she stood beneath! And thus it was in every way. Every kind of sorrow not bound up with sin flung its shadow across the life

of God made Man. He even allowed us to see how He too was overcome with grief at the loss of a dead friend, that loss which to us seems ever most hopeless, and which most shows how desolate we are, since it robs us of all consolation but the faded forms of a memory which shall also fade.

As Jesus walked with His disciples, a messenger, quick with grief, came rushing towards the Master, faltering forth, 'He Whom Thou lovest is sick!' Jesus listened, but answered not the mute entreaty of the sisters. He answered not, nor went, nor rebuked the fever, but waited while he whom He loved sickened yet more away in Bethania. Afterwards, when three long days had passed, Jesus suddenly said, 'Lazarus sleepeth.' The kindly fishermen who knew not that another word—the word which friendship dreads to utter—was struggling towards His lips, made offer of rude comfort, for they saw how sad he was: 'Nay, if he sleepeth, he doth well.' Then the word broke forth: 'He is dead!' But with the word His pent-up feelings burst out too, for they must not think Him hard or cruel towards the dear dead. His love for Lazarus would have hurried Him to Bethania, but a nobler love made Him tarry in order that Lazarus and the sisters, and all other sorrowing ones whom He loves should behold in agitated emotion the deep-swelling feeling which flowed from His heart. How happy we, knowing more about His love! and He, how glad in this our happiness! 'I rejoice for your sakes,' He said, 'that I was not there.' Had He been there how could He have let Lazarus die with Martha's and Mary's prayer overwhelming His heart from without and His own friendship throbbing within?

Jesus went to the place of mourning. He met the sisters. Their grief was sad to see. His own grief was rising ever, torrent-like, as human grief will rise when the clouds have fallen. He might have held His heart, for He was God, but He would not, He would feel as men feel. He asks where they have laid him. 'Come and see,' they say, 'Come and see.' The words touched and let loose the quivering barriers which had still withheld the brimming tide of friendship's fondness, 'And Jesus wept.' He wept for His dead friend, tears real and genuine, sincere and heart-begotten as any which sorrow can wring from our more selfish eyes; for they were the tears of God made Man. With awe the bystanders look on those love-pearls glistening on the face of that heroic Man who had ever been so kingly and so serene 'midst suffering, and with voices made low and gentle by sympathy they whisper wonderingly, one to the other, 'See! how He did love him!' Nor were their honest wits misled. 'Twere blasphemy to say that Christ would weep for show. 'Sad did He seem, and He was sad,' says St. Ambrose. But while the rough people so far truly judged, they erred in that they guessed not all, for they had not realised how His oneness in Person with God had lifted up the heart that wept to a love wide as the world's woe and deeper. Ah! yes, those tears are mine, for me, and thine, too, my brother, for thee. When thy head is bowed low think of Him Who wept for Lazarus, Who liveth now, knowing full well as man can know what thou dost feel.

But is there not one sorrow, one terrible grief, a sadness of all saddest, of which Jesus can know nothing, the grief of a soul that has been fouled with sin, the

shame, the fierce regret, the wild uprising of self-hatred and the horrible reeling back with writhing humiliation and agony of remorse, self-contempt that yet will not lower itself, bitterness and anger against a wrong that is self-done, against a guilt, a misery, a rottenness, a withersome corruption, a filth with which we have ourselves blackened and defiled our soul? Sin, sin, and its fright and sorrow and torture and hell, what can Christ know about that?

This doth He know, and better than all others, what it is to sorrow over the spiritually dead. We can know this only dimly and faintly, for although our soul be not reft of the life which grace giveth, although our faculties be not paralysed by serious fault, yet the very numbness of venial weakness prevents our realising to the full the value and glory of spiritual health and soul beauty, and thus dulls our sense to the lamentable decay festering in a sinful soul. But our Lord, for that He is sinless, understands the infinite worth of holiness, and consequently He well appreciates the pitiful misery and degradation of its loss. Again, sinless as He was, the sins of the world were to be heaped upon Him; He was to undertake the responsibility of them, and to stand before the tribunal of God as the culprit on whom should burst the long-gathering storm of infinite hatred of evil and relentless wrath against wrong. Himself, He could not sin; but He took upon Him the crimes of the world. He must answer for all the contemptible blasphemies of pride; for all the frantic fury of brute-like anger; for all the hateful meanness of envy, of avarice, of sloth; for all the filthiness of sottish drink; for all the hideous wallowings of the foulest

stain of all. How His brain must have reeled with shocked bewilderment at the mass of iniquity for which He must atone! How His heart must have stood still with terror! How His whole soul, in its more than maiden delicacy, must have shrunk in horrified shame from the touch of the load of human abominations thrust upon Him by lost man! Oh, anguish! Oh, agony of purity! O, Jesus! O, God! These things laid upon Thee, and yet men wonder when, at Gethsemane, Thy whole body did weep tears of blood!

Our Saviour's knowledge of man's miseries is not barren of result. He heals them either by drying the fountain of our sorrow or by ripening to harvest of nobler joy what we in tears have sown. Even at times He puts His infinite power forth to stay the action of Nature's sternest decree, and bids dead clay breathe fresh again with life. Thus in Bethania, then, He bade them roll away the stone which hid what lay within the tomb, and in His Godhead called, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And Lazarus came forth. With quick fondness and gentle sister-hands Mary and Martha, e'er joy could dry the tears upon their cheeks, had loosed the winding bands which bound their brother who had been dead. Then was their happiness all the greater for the sadness which had gone before. One such miracle Jesus wrought. Oftener done, it were not kindness. But a mightier wonder still is worked through His knowledge of our woe. Hour after hour, throughout all the years of the earth, hearts that were dead, eaten up with creeping sin and foul with sepulchral horror, are bidden forth from the tomb to the purity of God's light and to the breath of His

hope and His love by the feeling sympathy of the Sacred Heart.

There is in man a force which urges him to act. No sooner does his reason wake and flash its lordly ken across the world, weighing each several value of each several good, than he esteems some things to be but good for useful furtherance of a higher aim; some others to be good for that they be Nature's reward or help to Nature's law; some to be good by reason of their own sterling and unborrowed worth. These, then, he seeks. Not blindly, nor flung forward by inevitable power, nor dragged along helplessly, but with eyes open and head erect creation's lord advances on whatever quest he lists. He cannot stay, he must advance, he must choose. 'Before thee are good and evil, life and death, towards whatsoever thou wilt stretch forth thy hand.' But he is free, for there is one only power which can touch his will, and that power is called love. Now, although he cannot withstand, yet can he direct his love. Love is, in truth, the source of every act sprung not from earth but from thought. Without it man were no more than the stone which falls down to the ground, no better than the leaf whirled abroad in air, no greater than the wave which shatters itself in resultless foam against the stern ruggedness of the rock, no nobler than the tree rooted in matter, fed with matter, spreading from matter, dying and decaying again to matter. This life-force of man is love, for it is the willing answer to the beckoning of a good, the self-chosen quest of a worth which has won the will that shall win it.

It is true, indeed, that in a conventional sense this

word oftentimes does not reach beyond the narrow meaning of emotional tenderness, but in a loftier and wider sense love is the will's impulse towards worth. Thus love, true love, is only indirectly concerned with inferior creatures, in which it can only find use or pleasure, whilst it directly and of necessity tends towards nobler creatures, those that are thinking beings, intellectual, in whom alone it meets with real worth, true merit, attractions befitting its highest aspirations, and contentment fulfilling its deepest aims. Wherefore what we do not look on as soul, or as at least by soul made lovable, such we can only hold as a means for use, or selfishly turn to our pleasure, and then 'tis ourselves that we love, we are then only lovers of self.

But when our nobler nature desires a good becoming a soul it ascends to a higher world, and tends, as all love must, to union, not, indeed, to the union of clasped hands, for that is low and material, but to the union of thought and affection.

Nevertheless man's nature is not mere soul. It is a soul that breathes with a body, and so man's love is blended of both wish and emotion. He has both the spiritual force of a will and the feeling that throbs in a heart. Wherefore the response which shall perfectly crown man's love is a union with esteem again for esteem, and with feeling again for his feeling, an answer of soul and of heart, of love and of sympathy mingled. Until we find this in its own true kind or a fuller we cannot stay, for we hunger ; we must wander, we cannot rest. Yes ! we are seekers. Our whole being lets loose its every energy in quest of a love that shall stay its needs, and of a sympathy that shall share them.

Whither, then, shall the tide of human love be turned? Shall we let its current flow across the broad expanse of earth to satisfy itself in creatures' love? No! creatures' love cannot content us. It is either divided, or selfish, or idolatrous; for either it is not whole-hearted, or it seeks its own end, or it puts us in the place of God. But a love which measures its gifts is not enough for a soul; a love which loves itself alone is only a cruel mockery; a love which sacrifices all to us is a foolish, a nonsensical love, one which may make us vain for awhile, but which we can never esteem, and shall quickly learn to despise. It is only God's love which is infinite; only God's love can give a fathomless love to each and a boundless love to all.

And oh! what misery, what ruin to us should we let our affections fall into the prison of a creature's heart! Not in truth that we may not in some wise love created worth. The perfections which in creatures win our admiration and our love are, in very earnest, true although imperfect images of God's own beauty and good. We may, then, love them if only our love be well ordered, and above all if it rest not there. We may love them truly, devotedly, tenderly, but we must not give them all; we must not love them as though they were God. Woe to us if we do. Our very nature hurries us ever forward. It will never stop till it reach the infinite ocean where shallow imperfection there is none, but all is pure and strong and limitless. What sad proofs has not mankind's dolorous experience given that earth cannot stifle the intense longings of a soul for something better than clay, for something worthy of itself, for something which can only be God.

Wayward man may love some wretched object, and for its sake abandon all else beside, but that very idol will hereafter fall back upon him and will crush his heart and his soul. On the one hand he cleaves unto it till every nerve of his being seems to vibrate to its touch alone, every vein of his system seems to flow with its warmth alone, every throb of his heart seems to be but an answering echo to its life; all his faculties and his powers seem to have grown with it into one. On the other hand it is a created object—perishable. In it there is imperfection and countless failing in worth. In it there is what cannot be loved—defect; what may be hated—evil. It cannot crown with beatitude a soul that is Godlike, and so it bears within it the seeds of sin and despair. His love's passionate vehemence, while it madly clings to it, yet only lights up with more vivid horror how faultful it is in its wretched reality, how unlike what once it was in his dreams. The creature set in God's stead falls at the first trial-touch of experience, and in its fall crushes with cruel irony the heart that adores it, thus avenging its creator's wrong. Oh, torment! Oh, agony, now or hereafter! Man sinfully loves, but where sin is there is corruption; where corruption comes there must come death. Here 'tis the death of a heart. All those bonds and chains cannot withhold the terrible weight of a heart which is drawn with force resistless towards the centre of all love. The heart may be rent and shattered and shuddering, but if it love evil it shall know it, and then it cannot stay. It must on, trampling down under foot even its own love and its idol; on ever, in spite of heart-breaking conflict, on it must pass, on and over it, on towards

happiness, on towards love. O God, must it be ever so? Is it ever and always the same terrible struggle again? Or shall we at last find a love that can bless us and give happy rest to our souls? O God, do Thou in Thy mercy love us and take our love to Thee! In Thee above all do we put our hope. Thee above all do we love. As the bones that lay 'midst clay and corruption are clothed with living flesh, even so shall we arise and pass from out the grave of sin. 'Tis God Who calleth: 'Lazarus, come forth!'

God not only offers to our soul the rapturous glory and peace of His own home, but with far-reaching subtility of tenderness He would calm and win the startled strangeness of our human heart by tears of human sympathy. Infinite strength is made one with human weakness, since 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.' It is not, nor could it be, the weakness of fault; but it is the weakness of brotherhood in pain. For Jesus Christ, true God and true man, has felt that delicate blending of harmonious natures, that mysterious communion of souls, that fellowship of impulse, that sensitive union of thought and emotion, that exquisite kindred of mind and heart, that pure oneness of love, which, for that it makes us sharers in sorrows not our own, men have named sympathy. Our Saviour, therefore, in His Godhead commands the adoring admiration of our soul; in His manhood He both gives and wins compassionate tenderness of heart. Thus we should honour our Lord not only with uncovered head and bended knee, not only with spiritual submission of will, but also with affection's tenderest throb. There

is no aspiration, no friendship, no feeling, if it only be noble and pure, which we ought not to offer to Him.

His worth is beyond all thought, and no affection can equal His. It is tender as tenderest mother's; for of those that hate Him He says: 'I will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live.' He 'will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.'

His affection is delicate as that of a gentle sister, for He knows that we have yet more need of sympathy in our weaknesses than even in bitterest pain. After treachery like Peter's, an ordinary friend would have forsaken him. A dear friend might have passed him by or looked upon him coldly; but his divine Friend sought his eyes with eyes so tenderly reproachful that Peter was utterly overwhelmed with grief, in such sort that ever after, while he lived, he wept, till the constant tears frayed deep furrows down his face. Oh! if we would only think of the heart which spoke through that look when we are tempted to sin!

The affection of Jesus is generous even unto the very end. Think, my dear Brethren, of the scene in the garden of Olives, when Judas crept from out the conspirator's ambush into the space where lay our Redeemer, low, bent, and weeping agony's blood drops. Judas draws nearer, and again nearer, and bending forward with cruel heart touches with his lips the face of the God-Man. Oh, bitterest, satanic insult, that the token of tenderest fondness should become treachery's mark of doom! Yet, our Saviour, instead of hurling from Him straightway to the vengeance due to such demons, instead of grinding into crushed writhings, instead of withering, shrivelling, overwhelming with the fury of His wrath this ignoble and

shameless assassin, sends forth from His own divine lips, outraged by this mocking kiss, the gentle tones of a supreme appeal of friendship: 'Friend, why hast thou come hither?' Generosity full of wonderment! Marvel of zeal! Strange sublimity of pity! The traitor—Apostle, thief, perjured, sacrilegious Judas, working out hatefully the murder of His God—aye, even Judas Iscariot is, in this terrible hour still called by Jesus 'Friend!'

His affection is strong, strong as death. For the raising of Lazarus was the immediate cause of the High Priest's determination to make away with our Saviour. Thus, by this great miracle of love, He brought his friend back to life and went to meet His own death. His love is even stronger than death, for it invaded the dread empire of the tomb, and rescued thence the brother for whom Mary and Martha wept. And did He not say that the Baptism wherewith He longed, for our sakes, to be baptized was the Baptism of His own precious Blood? His love is even stronger than all the united powers of death and time, for it has left us, ever dying in true though mystic sacrifices, ever living in true life beneath mystic semblances, the same Body and the same Blood which were given for our sakes on Calvary.

Above all our Redeemer's heart is full of sympathy, and this is all in all to us. For in our human life sympathy is both the cause and the crown of love.

Meekly and silently He bears with our coldness, our petulance, or it may be our insulting sins. Gently and forgivingly He follows after us with graces and with blessings even while we stray. But when our dreams of vanity have fled, leaving us helplessly crushed under sorrow or under sin, then Jesus stands

pitying by the grave of our heart, and weeps. Oh, my dear Brethren, do not lightly forget the tears of Christ! Remember how His oneness in person with God had lifted up the Heart that wept to a love wide as the world's woe and deeper. Ah, yes! 'He loved me and delivered Himself up for me.' Those tears, then, are mine—for me; and thine, too, my brother—for thee. When thy head is bowed low remember that His Heart knows, as well as heart can know, what thou dost feel. Contemplate those tears of God made man. Mary, the Magdalen, sayeth to Him: 'Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died!' And she weeps, and the whole crowd about weeps, and Jesus, 'groaning within Himself,' asks, 'Where have ye laid him?' And they say, 'Come and see.' And Jesus wept. Behold the man! Behold the marvellous beauty of that face on which the angels love to look. Behold it bathed in tears. Behold the human emotion of our God! Watch each tear as it wells forth through His lashes, to start along His cheek and fall into the dust. Oh, divine tear, tear of pity and tear of love; tear of sorrow, tear of sympathy! Oh, let my heart be the dust which gathers with thirsty love this dew from heaven ere it fall to ungrateful earth. Oh, happy dust, thrice hallowed dust, to receive the tears of God. Oh, Jesus Christ! Oh, man who art God, and lovest us with God's love! Oh God who hast taken to Thyself a human heart in order to weep with us, and for us, and so win our human hearts, take them now, oh loving Heart, oh, Sacred Heart, take them and make them for ever Thine own.

Now, my dear Brethren, this is not mere sentiment or poetical exaggeration, or fanciful and unreal devo-

tion. It is only a statement of fact. For it is a fact, and in this fact are contained solid motives of heroism and of tenderness infinitely transcending the force and fondness of infinite human hearts. It is a fact that God became man for our sakes. It is a fact that the Heart of Jesus Christ is in all things, sin alone excepted, like our own. It is a fact that the affection of His Heart moved Him to die for the salvation of each single human soul. It is a fact that our Saviour's sorrows, sufferings and tears were all freely offered by His Heart for us. It is a fact that now, at this very moment He loves us both with the infinite pity of His Godhead and with the kind sympathy of His human Heart. He loves us and wishes to gain our love. How can we better strengthen and cheer our soul to act as good sense and gratitude demand, than by asking the great and gentle Heart of our Redeemer to touch our hearts with love for Him, not with a vague, hazy, fanciful, unreal love, but with a love true, practical, earnest, thoroughgoing, with a love such as we feel for those whom we reverently love on earth, with a love like His own, a love strong as death, tender as a tear, a personal love ?

Too often, even in our prayers, we look on Him only from afar. We only think of the terrible power and distance of God. We forget the tears of the God-Man, and our startled gaze falls quickly down again to the things of earth. Let us draw nearer and worship Him. In very truth He is also man, the fairest of the children of men. He has a human Heart, for He wept. It is the Heart which His Virgin Mother gave to Him, and which He hath given to us to be our help, our consolation and our love.

THE WOOD AND SHADOW OF THE CROSS

FEAST-DAY OF SAINT ANDREW.—NOVEMBER 30

My yoke is sweet and My burden light.—Matt. ii. 30.

THERE is in human life a strange wonder of mingled pain and joy, of tenderness dimmed with tears; of sorrow that is dark as death yet brightened by immortal hope. There is a deeper mystery still in the blended shade and sunshine which come to us from heaven. When Paradise was lost there was given, with the curse of toil and woe, a promise which should change it into benediction. Through all the weary ages of waiting the Prophet's words were full of warning and yet full of welcome; full of lament and yet full of rapture; full of forebodings of evil and full of pledges of peace; full of the sighs and groans of fallen man and full of the exultant gratitude of man redeemed; full of the dolorous passion and humiliation of the Victim that should be slain, and full of the glory and triumph of the coming King. So, too, the last of all the prophets, the forerunner of the Christ, the preacher of penance, the apostle of austerity, 'the voice of one crying in the desert,' was also the first proclaimer of the human meekness and gentleness of God. For, when the Baptist saw Jesus he uttered his great prophecy of love that dies in sacrifice,

and of sacrifice that lives through love, crying aloud : ' Behold the Lamb of God.' . . .

Andrew, John's disciple, heard the voice which had cried from the wilderness, ' Prepare ye the ways of the Lord, make straight His paths.' He heard and obeyed the voice of the Herald prophet of the Messiah : he followed the Lamb of God. St. Andrew was the first who called our Saviour Master, to Whom he brought his own brother Simon afterwards St. Peter. St. Andrew was the first with his brother Peter to leave all, at the Word of our Redeemer, in order to consecrate his life to the preaching of peace; and he is best known, among the saints, for the love and joy with which he welcomed a death like unto that of the Lamb of God. Thus St. Andrew was the first follower of Christ, and the great lover of the Cross. Wherefore it well becomes St. Andrew's festival that we should meditate upon the mystery of the Cross.

It is the mystery of the wood on which Christ died and by which He gave us life. It is also the mystery of a Shadow which, from the Cross, falls upon our lives, bringing darkness that is strangely illumined by truth, bringing bitterness that is strangely sweetened by love.

The wood of the Cross was hard and dead. Once it had bloomed in living majesty, firmly rooted in fruitful soil. As each spring brought it fuller growth it had budded forth into pale, tender leaflets, and as these spread and deepened into summer richness the sunshine had glinted and glittered, and sparkled and played, and rippled and laughed through the luxuriant loveliness of its foliage, while amidst its shady depths the breeze had softly whispered and the birds had loudly and joyously sung. As each year waned and

the sunset of the seasons glowed in autumn-tide upon the woods all the green leaves became gold and amber, and scarlet, and russet and red. Through each winter the tree had rested and slept, until each spring had wakened it up again to beautiful and healthful life. But a day came when this tree, destined by man to die and to slay, was blessed by God with the Flower of the Promise of Jesse, the Fruit of the Virgin's innocence, the Incarnate Grace of the Word ripening into Redeeming Love.

The tree was felled, and from out of its dead strength a huge beam was roughly hewn, heavy and coarse and harsh, with rugged, splintering surface. To this beam was fastened, cross-wise, another like itself but lesser. This was the wood of the Cross. Then it was laid upon the shoulder of Christ, and became the sacred Cross of Christ.

Heavy and harshly it pressed down upon Him with dead weight, bruising the bruised shoulder, reddening and moistening its dry, uncouth fibres with His Precious Blood; smiting with agonising jolt against the crown of thorns which, answering, sent each shock and stroke through the Redeemer's Head with piercing point of burning pain and thrilling pang that flashed like fire. Pressing upon Him, weighing upon Him, overwhelming Him, the hard, heavy wood of the Cross, heavily, harshly, ruthlessly crushed Him to the earth. Oh . . . wood, wood, wood of the Cross. . . . Could even ungrateful hearts be hard as thee, or sinful hearts as cruel? Yet no, no. . . . The wood is sacred, not cruel; not pitiless, but hallowed. . . . For Christ lovingly clasped His arms around the Cross, and on the arms of the Cross love laid our loving Christ. There

was He fastened by nails that joined both Flesh and wood in blood and death ; nails that held the Lamb of God upon His bed of death, with hold bitter as sacrifice, strong as love.

Look upon that sacred wood. . . . If ever you have known, and loved, and lost ; if ever you have known one whose soul was clear, calm, and serene as truth itself, noble as stateliest principle, courteous as loftiest chivalry, magnanimous as warmest mercy, pure as the dew that glistens on a lily, unsullied as the stars that shine above the clouds ; if ever you have loved one whose heart was like an opening flower, full of sweetness, grace and charm, whose voice awoke strange echoings of music to your hope, whose very presence breathed a fragrant excellence into your inmost thoughts and aims, teaching you with subtle influence what joy there is in unselfishness, what happiness there is in being kind ; if ever you have lost, so that of all the bright, noble, rapturous past there is now left to you only a memory that lingers in mournful loneliness near a grave, where the life which you have known and loved and lost, sleeps : then you must know what it is to have a memory of deep tender eyes that follow you with haunting fixedness, as though they were looking through and through your very soul : a memory of a voice that often yet, in silent hours, echoes in your heart until your fond fancy makes you pause to listen, a memory of words and scenes of the dear dead past ; then you may know, too, what it is to have the saddest of all memories that are sweet, the sweetest of all memories that are sad : the memory of the hour when there was given to you all that you have now left of all that love—a keepsake.

Oh—look upon the dead wood of the Cross on which He died Who loved us first and loved us most. . . . Sweet wood, it is empurpled with His Blood, and in it are the rent traces of the nails. . . . Dear, dead wood on which was stretched the Living Body of our God. . . . Beloved wood which was close by to catch our Saviour's sighs and groans of agony ; which shuddered with the quiverings of His pain. . . . Around its stem were twined His Mother's arms, at its foot fell the warm tears of the Magdalen, mingling with the warm Blood of Him Who had pitied her. Sacred wood which held up aloft towards heaven the perfect Sacrifice of Salvation, the willing Victim, the Ransom of the World, the Lamb of God, meek and innocent, yet pallid, cold, and dead. Hallowed wood of sacrifice and love. It is the dear, the sacred Cross on which He died Who loved us first and loved us most. It is the keepsake of His love.

Yet do not think that the holy Rood is merely blood-stained wood, a tree of ignominy. The mystery of the Cross in this is most resplendent, that while by it life suffered death, yet by it, too, death brought forth life. The Cross, indeed, was the bed of death to mortal life, but it was also the cradle of life that is immortal.

Yes, the hard, dead wood which held the torn and tortured Body of our gentle Christ up before the world, that He might die in sore agony of pain, in bitter anguish of betrayal as a sign of terror to slaves, as a sign of shame to felons—that hard, dead wood was hallowed, blessed, consecrated, by the touch of Christ's Blood and Love, so as to be thenceforth a sign of ransom and of pardon, a sign of peace and happy

hope, a sign of glory and of triumph, a sign of the Redemption of man, and a sign of God's benediction. Hence, as far as is the glory of the eternal heavens above the fairness of the passing earth, so far is the splendour of the wood of the Cross above the worth and beauty of it in the sunniest hour of its living bloom. Wherefore this dead wood is no dead memory of a dead love, no faded keepsake of one known and loved and lost; but it is a treasured pledge, a sacred token of a love that lives, with all the sweetness of old memories brought back, with all the sadness of past pain changed by living love from death to life, from bleeding wounds to bounding heart, from shame to honour, from pangs of woe to joys of peace, from all the darkness, terror and desolation of the tomb to all the promise, power, and rapture of the Resurrection.

The Cross is now Christ's standard. It floats upon the banners of the brave in battle. It flashes in gold, or sparkles in gem as the choicest ornament of honour. It hangs above the place at home where old and young kneel down to pray. It stands above the consecrated Church to mark the home of God. It glitters amidst the clouds, like a star of hope, above the cities of Christian men. It is the badge of the pastoral power of the Shepherds of Christ's people. It brings soft tears to the eyes of the sinner. It brings bright rapture to the eyes of the saint. It comforts and upholds us in life—it blesses and strengthens us in death. It shatters the snares, and overthrows the forces of evil. It points the way and opens the gate of Paradise. It is the sign of Christ's salvation. It is the standard of Christ's power. It is the symbol of Christ's mercy. It is the pledge of Christ's protec-

tion. It is the token of Christ's watchfulness. It is the keepsake of Christ's love.

Thus, then, this tree of fair and fruitful grace, empurpled with the King's most Precious Blood, hallowed by the touch of His most sacred Limbs, enriched with the Ransom of the world, trophy of sin's defeat and virtue's triumph, standard of the glory of the Son of God, the Cross is not only the Sacred sign, it is the consecrated instrument of Christ's Faith and Hope and Love.

Therefore do we bless ourselves with the holy sign of the Cross. We bless ourselves with a living act of faith in the most adorable Trinity. We bless ourselves with an actual proof of the reality of Christ's Incarnation. We bless ourselves with a sacramental sign which lays Christ's Cross upon us in holy, happy benediction. We bless ourselves in faith through hope, with love.

There was a shadow which hung over the human race: a shadow deep and drear, so that men were sitting in darkness, under the very shadow of death. It was the shadow of Paradise lost, and it was only brightened by a promise of the dawn. When the Light of the World came and shone amidst the darkness that shadow passed away; but another Shadow came, a strange Shadow of mingled gloom and brilliancy, a Shadow of mysterious sadness that was sweet, a Shadow of mysterious sweetness that was sad, a Shadow of suffering, yet a Shadow of blessing. It is the Shadow of the Cross.

A shadow of suffering will follow us, and must fall upon us while we live. Need I tell you that human life is sad? Need I tell you that as there are

bitter breezes which parch the earth, so there are harsh winter winds of adversity which harden hearts? Need I tell you what tears are? Or is it only from hearsay that you have learned what suffering means? Shall I recount to you the miseries of man: how his life begins amidst moans and wailing; how he lives amidst smothered groan or outrending shriek; how he passes away amidst writhing pain, convulsive pang, shuddering agony, stiffening stupor, into the cold, ghastly rigidity of a corpse? Must I remind you that all life ends in the grave: that all love ends in forgetfulness? Surely, surely, life is sad and full of many miseries. There is a shadow over it. A shadow? Aye, there is upon it the very gloom and bitterness of coming death. . . . For those who know no life but that which ends in death, there is no breaking forth of light; there is no lifting of the shadow; there is only night and only woe, only horror and despair. For us who know that death was conquered by the Sacrifice of Him Who loved us first and loved us most, this shadow on our lives is lit with dawn from beyond the tomb. It is touched with strange sweetness, and hallowed with mysterious charm, as the sacred wood was touched and hallowed by the love and Blood of Christ, for it is the shadow of a gloom which shrouds the gates of glory; it is the shadow of a death which opens to eternal life; it is the shadow of a suffering which brings a balm of joyful brightness; it is the shadow cast before by coming peace that shall exult in rapturous energy of love, and by coming love that shall repose in unruffled happiness of peace. It is the Shadow of the Cross.

Let me, then, speak to you of this Shadow brighter

than all the sunshine of our earth. Let me speak to you of this suffering sweeter than all the joys of our weary world. Let me tell you how your life may not be lost in the hopeless light of pagan wretchedness, but touched with the hope and consecrated by the joy which are thrown around our lives by the Shadow of the Cross.

And yet, how can I speak to you when your sufferings are darkest and deepest? How can I dare break in upon your grief with cold words of human comfort, which to you have now no meaning? I cannot tell your tears they must not flow: I cannot tell your breaking heart it must not break. The idle, foolish words of human weakness do but mock your misery; they only jar with bitterness against the agonising fibres of your woe. I cannot speak to you in human words, but I must speak to you words which have all the power of infinite pity, and all the pathos of a breaking heart: words which came from the fathomless fountain of Eternal Wisdom and Uncreated Love; words made human in the breathing tenderness of the meek Lamb of God; words uttered by the Voice which won the sinful and consoled the sorrowful of all time; words which burst forth from Divine lips that were tremulous with emotion; words plaintive, yet soothing; omnipotent to help through their very weakness: in their very sadness full of balm and blessing; words like these: 'Come to Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.' 'Take up My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light.' . . . .

What is this yoke which has become so strangely sweet? What is this weight so burthensome yet made so marvellously light? It is the mysterious Cross of Christ. 'Who will come after Me,' saith Christ, 'let him take up his Cross and follow Me.' The Cross is the yoke that is made sweet by sympathy. It is the burden that is made light by love. The secret of what is strange in human life; of all its sweetness that must be sad; of all its sadness that may be sweet, is in the Shadow of the Cross. God, to Whose wisdom there is no measure and to Whose might there is no bound, could have led us to Himself, by high paths of undimmed excellence or by lowly ways of natural feebleness; but He chose a means more dazzling in its unapproachable magnificence as well as more winning in its fathomless stooping, when He Himself came down to take our nature, becoming Man that as He made our flesh divine, and as He changed an ignominious tree of pain into the holy Cross of our Redemption, so, too, He might, by sharing our sadness, embalm it with the fragrant sweetness of sympathy, and by mingling His own tears and Blood and Love with ours, changed the shroud-like shadow of human sufferings into tender mists and morning clouds that clothe with beauty while they dim with dew the dawn of the peace of Paradise, as we approach our eternal Home. Therefore did our Redeemer utter this deep prophecy: 'When I shall have been lifted up I will draw all things to Myself.' Thus will He lift us up to the throne of His Resurrection, Whom He hath first lifted up to the altar of His Cross.

Do not fear the Cross. . . . Without it you cannot find Christ. With it you will find the help

and consolation of His open Heart. Without Christ the Cross is hard, dead, crushing wood. With Christ the Cross is strong as God, sweet as love, tender as a tear.

Oh, learn the meaning of the mystery from St. Andrew, first follower of the Lamb of God, who after that he had carried the good tidings of the Cross through Scythia, Epirus, Thrace, when brought prisoner before Egeas, proconsul of Roman tyranny in Achaia, and ordered to make sacrifice to heathen gods, did answer in these words: 'To the Omnipotent God, the Only and the True, do I each day in sacrifice make offering on the altar, not of oxen flesh nor blood of goats, but of the Spotless Lamb, Whose Flesh all the people that believeth doth partake of; yet this Lamb, Who hath been sacrificed, remaineth ever living and unhurt.'

Then did the Blessed Andrew speak much of the sacred mystery of the Cross. Whereat the Roman, stubborn in pride, quick in brutality, condemned the Apostle to be crucified, that thus he might be likened unto the Christ he loved. But when St. Andrew from afar beheld his Cross all the yearnings of his love found utterance in this most sweet prayer: 'O good Cross . . . that from the dear Body of my Lord didst gain becomingness and grace; O well-beloved Cross, O long desired, O tenderly cherished Cross. . . . Faithfully have I sought for thee. . . . Now at long last, made ready for my eager soul, do thou, sweet Cross, take me from the midst of men and bring me to my Master that by thee, dear Cross, He may receive me, Who by thee did redeem me. . . . Do thou save me, O good Cross.'

Do not, then, fear to look upon the Cross. . . . Do not fear to cling to it, even though its Shadow fall upon your life. It is the Shadow of God's love which brings us sweetness through its sadness. If you have ever looked with eyes dimmed by the tenderness of a lost love upon the image of a dear, dead friend, while the sad, sweet gaze which you will never more meet upon earth seemed to follow you with plaintive pleadings, did you not think of the days that are gone? Did you not think of the proofs of love that were given to you? Did you not think of your cold, hard want of thought, of your bitter, selfish want of feeling, of your cruel want of sympathy when you might so easily and so sweetly have blessed that dead heart by generous pity and by gentle love? Did you not feel a wild, throbbing wish that it were possible yet to pluck away from the past all the bitter pain you inflicted, and tell again and again to the dear dead all the love which you held back until it was for ever too late? Look upon the Cross. . . . It is not yet too late to love Christ. Look upon the Cross. . . . It is the image of a living love. There is yet time to make old memories live again in the divine resurrection of grace, banishing for ever from them all that was bitter and wrong, renewing for ever in them all that was noble and kind. Look upon the Cross. . . . There is yet time to place the present under the shadow of our Saviour's outstretched arms of mercy, under the Shelter of His Sacred Heart. Look upon the Cross and learn to love the Friend Who loved you first, for He loved you from eternity, and Who loved you most, for He loved you unto the Cross. Look and

love. . . . All your sadness shall be made sweet, and all your love shall be made happy, when Jesus, with all the pity of His redeeming tenderness, and with all the power of His crowning God-Head, blesses us with the sign of the Cross, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

GOOD-BYE

THE PARTING OF MARY AND JESUS

Did you not know that I must be about the things that are My Father's?—Luke ii. 49.

Up to then, although with the prophecy of Simeon the point of the sword had entered her heart, although with the flight into Egypt the darkness of her desolate home had overcast her thought and chilled her soul, although the Shadow of the Cross was deepening in gloom and nearing in menace all over her life, yet up to then there had been heard no threat of separation, no echo of 'Good-bye.' Holy souls have heroic trials. It was befitting that she, Mary, who of all mere creatures was holiest, should endure such dolorous trial as would make her nearest as well as dearest to her Son. Therefore did she, Queen amongst the martyrs, undergo the most keen anguish of life and the most excruciating agony of death in the dolor of His loss. Her brain was to be distraught with terror and doubt; her heart was to be broken with grief and regret; her very soul was to seem lost in a gloom of despair at the actual disappearance of her Boy; and even when He is found, she must hear, aye, even from His own loving lips, a sentence of doom, the warning of His final parting, the anticipated echo of His last Good-bye. He reminds her of what she

indeed knew as an angel and accepted as a martyr, that while His life and love are hers, He has still a more divine destiny than that of a happy home to accomplish by His Cross. He does not love His mother less, but He loves His mission more. 'Did you not know that I must be about the things that are My Father's?'

At the ending of the year our thought must turn back. We must linger one moment in mournful meditation to gaze upon it before we bid it for ever Good-bye. But before the ebbing tide of this old year has mingled its faint and falling waters with the ocean of the past, while the beloved memories that were sweet and the sad memories that were sacred crowd around us in tender appeal, while the faces of friends that are distant or dead look upon us once more from dim horizons, while in the eyes of friends that are near there is a shadow of waning light, while in each tone that marks the passing time and dooms to death each newborn instant there is the heralding of eternity, our heart must ask if all that was nobly dear in the past is, indeed, and for ever lost, or if there cannot be a hope that the sorrows and trials and joys that are gone shall yet come back to us in the hallowed harvest of a divine resurrection, whether the stern duty of being about the things that are our Father's must mean the ruthless and irrevocable rending of all human ties, or if the true children of our Father may not hereafter meet again in life and love within some one of our Father's mansions, whether Good-bye must mean not merely the darkening of our home, but also the deadening of our heart, or if we may not trust that our human-hearted God will in His own Divine Day, give to the

friends whom He has blessed upon earth one home, one heart, one heaven.

'Home, sweet home!' . . . Have you ever heard this old air sung by some poor wanderer who once had had a home? Did not the unconscious pathos of a love that had been lost give to that untaught voice, those strident tones, a subtle power, such as sweetest singer never had, the power to pierce the gathered ice upon your heart, and make you think and feel again as when you were a child?

Or, when, in some lone hour, far away, your musing thought strayed towards the past, a gleam of flickering firelight may have shown to your fancy a circle of happy faces that you knew, and an echo of gentle voices or soft laughter may have come to you tenderly back? But, some are now living scattered apart; and some lie buried in the old churchyard; and you are, perchance, homeless. A quiet tear of holy dew may dim your eye while the intense sadness of hopeless regret and the intense sweetness of happy memories flood your soul with a tenderness of music and a sacredness of prayer; for, you hear in your heart the old hymn of hallowed affection: 'Home, sweet home!' With a wild wave of emotion, you remember how dear were those other days; yet, oh! how much dearer you felt them to be when the time of parting drew near. Have you forgotten your feelings when you said 'Good-bye?'

Nazareth was Mary's home. Thither she brought her babe when she came back from Bethlehem. Thither she returned from their exile in Egypt back again with her Boy. There, in the stone cottage on the slope of the hill, with the cornfields and fruit

gardens below, with the wild flowers and rocks above, in their simple, peaceful valley, in a joyful mystery of one home, the mother and her Child-God lived and loved together. It was the old home, yet it was ever new in happiness; for, under the roof-tree where she slept, at the table where she sat, close by the chamber where she worked—slept, or sat, or toiled, her Son. All that belonged to her was there. It was the treasure-store of golden memories. It was the minting-house of sterling hopes. It was the sanctuary of worship. It was the shrine of affection. It was, in truth, for her the one central spot of the universe, towards which the heavens stooped, towards which the earth was lifted up, towards which the past had looked forward, towards which the future should look back, around which all creation moved, in which the God of her faith was incarnate, in which the Child of her heart was Divine. It was everything to her: it was His home. When He was present her soul was encircled with a glory of sunshine. When He was away she was happy in the invisible presence of His certain return. She heard His footstep near the door, the latch lifted, the sound of His voice. She saw His face, a revelation, a rapture! It was her Child, her God, in her home.

From infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, it was His home. Then falls the nearing shadow of parting. How, sometimes, His mother would see in His eyes the thought that the time was near!

Oh, how swiftly the quiet days of a happy home pass by! At last came the last year, then the last month, then the last week, then the last day, then the

last hour. They stood at the door of their home, Mother and Son. Were their hearts human? Oh! if so, surely, then, surely, a wild tumult of tenderness throbbed through their veins, or ebbed away with a desolate chill. His Mother's arms are round His neck. His Mother's eyes are fixed on His. His Mother's lips are pale and quivering. His Mother's face is white as death; and, down her cheeks, unheeded, fall big, silent tears. 'Mother,' he says, 'Good-bye!' The word will not leave her heart. At last, with a convulsive sob, it comes, rending her heart: 'Jesus, my Child, good-bye!' Away down the slope He went; away, down into the valley; away, down the winding road, until, round the distant turning, He passed away from the old home. It was never to be His home again. Mary stood, still looking at the spot where she had seen Him disappear. Silent, she stood, and for a moment motionless, until the sense of her utter bereavement smote with a shock on her soul. She turned to re-enter her home. A sudden change had come upon her life. As though long years of anxious waiting had wearied her; as though long years of suffering had exhausted her; as though long, long years of loneliness had weighed her down; there was a tone in her voice of calm but unutterable grief; there was a look in her eyes of patient but uncomprehended pain; there was a feeling in her heart of saintly but crushing regret. Her home was home no more; for it was never to be His home again. The house was there, the chair on which He sat, the couch on which He rested, the workman's tools which He had used. Each trifle told of Him, and all reminded her that He was gone. The sunbeam coming through

the window seemed pale and cold. The flowers that bloomed about seemed to have faded and to have lost their fragrance. The house was drear, and very lonely. In the solitude there was ever the recollection of a vanished presence. In the silence there was ever the memory of a far-off voice. It was no home. She still lived there, but the light and love which had made it home had left her. The sweet song of her heart had been hushed by the sound of a fatal word : 'Good-bye!'

Have you never said 'Good-bye' to a friend whom you dearly loved? Or has your home been never desolate? Or have you never had a home? Or have you never known a true mother? If this, indeed, be so, you have been spared much sorrow; but you have been also left without the sense of what, on earth, is noblest, dearest, Godliest. You may, then, think that Mary's sorrow was not great. You may even fancy, if your selfishness be very exclusive and intense, that Mary's sanctity rendered her inhuman. Or, perhaps, if you are incapable of sympathy, it may appear to you that she cannot have been so forlorn, since she still could see her Son from time to time. Then you do not know what home is.

Home is home no more when the chords of affection are snapped, when separation—death's twin brother—wrenches asunder the hands that were clasped, and severs, with a distance of seas and a desert of absence, hearts that led one life under one roof-tree of love. There is no true affection that does not cling to the union of material presence. There is no real affection that does not suffer actual pain when it must say 'Good-bye!'

The human race has a life of its own ; an existence which varies in tone of thought and temper of character with the ages that come and go. The Church, in as far as it is made up of men, is human, and has its own accidental periods of intellectual life, its own vicissitudes of social ebb or flow, its own changing phases of spiritual climate ruled by some characteristic influence of evil or of good. Yet this influence, however characteristic of its own time, may bear a kindred likeness to the influence of another age. The evil influence, characteristic of the age which dawned with the seventeenth century, and has not quite disappeared even in our own, is the influence of the Jansenist, and the Jansenist is only the Pharisee in modern guise.

There is a mystery in the loosened wrath and indignant scorn with which Christ condemned the hypocrite teachers of false asceticism ; and there is a mystery in the imperious pity and relentless love with which He sought for the souls of the simple. This double mystery is presented to our thought in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. The spiteful Pharisees could not obscure the spiritual splendour of Christ's teaching, so they cunningly tried to misrepresent the human element that was in it, calling Him ' a wine bibber,' ' a glutton,' and ' the friend of sinners.' The ' generation of vipers ' is not extinct. For the modern Pharisee, too, sanctity consists in soul-less observances. The Jansenist will tolerate no charity unless it be cold. For him, feeling and fault are equally damnable. He is shocked by a sigh of weariness or by a groan of suffering. He is horrified at any trace of friendship. He simply

despairs of those whose sympathy is warm and whose love is strong. Like the Pharisee, his brother of old, the Jansenist has one essential mark that separates him from Christ. Both, like the lost Pagans of whom St. Paul speaks, are 'without affection.' They have one cardinal doctrine, 'Whitened sepulchres,' smooth-faced Pharisee, underhand Jansenist—they all preach 'Detachment.'

The word Detachment has been, indeed, used by writers of undeniable authority, and something of what it implies has been unanimously insisted on both by saints and doctors. That is precisely the reason why the Jansenist has sought to warp the word into a meaning that is false. Let us try to get at the real meaning of these things.

Detachment is the negation of attachment. Detachment is negative, attachment positive. Detachment means separation, estrangement, breaking of bonds, freedom from ties; and so, in its most direct, close, and strict sense, it means the absence of heart-clingings, the death of all love that is not exclusively spiritual, and the burial of all affection belonging to flesh and blood. Attachment, besides the serene devotedness of our spiritual will, means also the living presence of human feeling, the actual growth of human sympathy.

Now, are we to aim chiefly at detachment in order to advance in holiness, or will attachment bring us nearer to God? Which is to be our first and chief aim, our direct and immediate object, the end towards which we look, above and beyond all else, in spiritual life?

In the Christian theory, charity, or attachment

to God, is not only the cause of all supernatural good, but also the cause that breaks all bonds of sin and emancipates men to the freedom of children of God. Hence, detachment has no place in Christian life except as a consequence involved in attachment or the true love of God. According to the teaching of Jansenistic ascetics, detachment is not only a direct aim in itself, but it is a whole spiritual system to be gone through as a means of getting ready to love God. Thus, detachment is the Cross without Christ. It is the bitterness of denial unsweetened by motive. It is the gloom of austerity unillumined by love. It is the irrational cursing of nature, the cruel torture of feeling. It is the gospel of callousness. It is a direct intent to kill self, and thus it is moral suicide. It is the doctrine that the ruin and devastation of whatever is must precede the establishment of what should be ; and thus it is Nihilism applied to the soul. Attachment means Christ loved even to the Cross. It is the radiant warmth of a great motive, which so transfigures all that ' the yoke is sweet and the burden light.' It is the mysterious power which changes pain into pleasure, want into wealth, renouncement of earth into pilgrimage towards Paradise, sacrifice into friendship, labour into love. It is the gospel of charity, the death of law in the life of vocation, the blessing of nature in the consecration of grace, the purifying of the heart in the fire of affection, the making of our own selves divine by our human love of God.

But another question still remains. How far does this go ? Does it mean that the love of God tends to withdraw us from human affection ? Does it mean

that the life of the spirit tends to bring death to the heart? Does it mean that sanctity tends to chill sympathy?

Understand well, in the first place, that human affections can only be hindered from stifling one's life with unwholesome stagnation, as they can only be withdrawn from drowning its natural fruitfulness under an overpowering flood, by opening their way to the ocean of love.

A brook will bubble forth from the base of the upper hills and, if it be not lost in marsh or buried in some rocky reservoir, it will bound down in mountain freedom and in simple beauty, filling all the hollows of the hills with the tender mystery of its mist and with the sonorous music of its motion, winding its hasty way in and out of the valleys, steadying its straighter but slower step through the plain, until, at last, it blends its tributary waters with the waves of the great sea. Many a plodding rustic will grumble at the uselessness of its beauty. Many an enthusiast will sigh over the plainness of its barge-laden parts. Many an engineer will plan a straighter channel for it. Many a painter will dream of how it might be won to linger into lakes or to leap over falls. But the river is both beautiful and useful by Nature; and the art which would do more than aid it in this would only succeed in making it keep still as a swamp or rush on as a drain.

So, the natural outpourings of the human heart are not to be despised by Jansenists on account of their beauty, nor is their usefulness to be overlooked even by saints. Let them keep within their banks, but let them flow. Science that would make all

things only useful would rob the world of its highest use. Poetry that would make all things only beautiful would blot from the universe its truest charm. The Jansenist who admits no heart is as senseless and as inhuman as the materialist who admits no soul.

Love will riot if it be free. It will pine if it be imprisoned. If it be killed it will decay. Love can bear no chain; it will obey no law; love cannot be conquered, nor can it even be controlled, except by love. Wherefore human love can only be bounded by the boundless love of God.

If, then, poor child, your heart be wayward or wrong, or if you shudder in moments of calm meditation at the horrible risk that you run in having a heart at all, do not straightway strive to crush it. It cannot die while you still live, and so you cannot stifle it. If your heart be wrong it is because, when you yield to its whim, your affection is false and selfish. It does not really love too much, but it does not truly love at all. Love does not seek its own pleasure or profit. If, then, your heart be wrong, it is not because it is warm and generous, but because you are cold and selfish. Do not crush it. Lift it up to love not less, but more. Lift it with love to sacrifice. Lift it up, with all its fulness of feeling and warmth of affection, to leave with strong resolution whatever could lower or poison its love. Lift it up, with all its noble devotedness, to cling to Christ, even though it feel the Cross. Lift it up to love, not less, but more.

God took a human heart in order that your heart might love Him with all its strength and warmth, as your soul should love Him with all its angelic force. Now Christ said, ' Love one another as I have

loved you.' When your heart is full of the tenderness of Christ, all its tenderness will become true, and therefore pure; all its strength will become warm, and therefore noble. But the Jansenist means that our love must freeze into the rigid chill of mere intellectual interest in the salvation of mankind. Thus he glibly quotes that saying of our Lord: 'He that hates not father and mother cannot be my disciple.' But what is the real meaning of this? Does Christ forbid us to keep the Fourth Commandment? Nay, nay! It were blasphemy to say so. His words were moulded in Hebrew idiom, and their only sense, rendered in English, is: 'He that loves father or mother above Me cannot be My disciple.' Neither let thy soul be troubled by harsh echoes of stray words wrenched from the writings of saints, like that stern warning: 'Wish not that anyone should have his heart taken up with thoughts of thee; nor be thou thyself taken up with the love of anyone.' Is the only road to sanctity by the austere exclusiveness of detachment? Narrow, narrow, narrow Jansenist! Why not also quote from that very chapter, that other phrase: 'Without a friend thou canst not well live, and if Jesus be not to thee above all thy friends thou shalt be exceedingly sad and forlorn.' Understand, Christian, the true meaning of the saint: Love not thy friends less but love Jesus more.

Hear the reasoning of Christian theology on this point. The right nature of affection is to be determined by the foundation on which it rests, by the principle from which it proceeds, and by the object towards which it tends. Now a child's love for its mother is founded on the unity of flesh and blood;

it flows from the throbbing warmth and yearning sympathies which must answer with the love of its life for the life which it got from love; and it seeks in its trouble to rest on its mother's bosom, as it seeks in its triumphs, to gain for the work of its hand the blessing of its mother's smile. Now, has Christ a human heart? If you deny this you are not a Christian. If you admit it, you must own that if there is blood in Christ's heart it is His Mother's. But if there is blood there is feeling; and if there is feeling there is fondness. Is His love for His Mother a heart affection? Only a Jansenist would dare to say that Christ's heart is heartless. If Christ has a human heart surely, surely, it uprose with unutterable tide of emotion when her voice trilled sweetly on His ear, when her presence brought Him sunshine, when her eyes were fixed on His. Surely, too, when that sad hour came that they should bid 'Good-bye' a fainting sense of far away, a silent dreariness of ebbing hope, a chill numbness of winter and of darkness drained from his cheek the blood away, and gathered heart-mists in His eyes, and held His heart with icy grasp under the doom of separation. The heart affection of the Mother and her Son was the measure of their pain at parting.

When the friends we love are gone and the union of one home is broken there is left the union of one heart. But this is darkened by the shadow of a sword. Separation is a kindred woe with death. Good-bye is an echo from the grave. Thus, when Jesus left His Mother's home their hearts indeed were one in fond affection, but on them came, as never it had come before, the gloom of Calvary, the spectre

of the Cross. Good-bye! Good-bye, fond heart! for yet awhile, and then Good-bye for ever! For ever? Aye! for ever upon earth. We shall rise again, but when we meet beyond the everlasting shore shall we be again one heart in heaven?

Many a time you said 'Good-bye' when hope was still left with life. Have you never said 'Good-bye' with the hopeless grief of death? Can you forget the wistful look of the soul that was going away? Do you not hear in the wakeful hours of your loneliness the few broken words of that farewell, so solemn in its tenderness, so intense in its mournful message, when the heart that had loved you could love you no more? Yes! even though the union of material presence be severed by parting from home, friends far away may be together by the mutual bond that makes them one heart. But, ah! when the heart is cold, when all that is left of that life, of its look, of its voice, of its grace, of its light, and its loveliness is merely rigid clay, your heart is alone, and if you would say 'Good-bye' it must be by the side of the grave. Between you flows the eternal ocean. Between you hangs impenetrable gloom. Between you a mystery of doom waits until you, too, are dead. Above you, in the sun or midst the snow, in the dismal rainpour, or in the healthful breeze, the unconscious elements work on as of old. Around you, unconscious Nature buds or blooms, or fades or falls, as in the past. Before you, on an unconscious stone is now chiselled a name that still sounds like living music to your inward ear. Beneath your foot the long grass hides the soil, and the deep soil hides a heart; and that heart is now only unconscious clay. Good-bye, fond

heart! Good-bye, for ever upon earth! but the heart cannot hear you! Will it never love you any more?

All affection in life is sad; for all friendship leads to parting, and all parting ends in death. There is no love that has not got its shadow, and this shadow is the sentence of its coming death. Is not all love, then, only a bitter sweetness that brings with it a foretaste of the hopeless desolation of the tomb? May not your heart, then, burst forth in words like these: Leave me, then, my friends, leave me to die alone? All my help, my hand of friendship, with all its open generosity to give, with all its clenched strength to support, is pledged to you. Ask no more. Do not, in pity, bind my heart with bonds that grow into its inmost sympathies with living grasp, only to tear them away in an agony of good-bye. Leave me, my friends! I must die to love in life, for I cannot face a death that means friendship's eternal doom. Love me not deeply, tenderly! For lo! we must part; and though we meet again, yet one time we must part for ever. Leave me, my friends! 'Good-bye.'

Yet, stay. Tarry one moment more. May there not be a mysterious resurrection of love? Did not Christ's human heart come forth living from the tomb? Has not God now a human heart? Then, surely, if through love for us God has a human heart, it must be by His great Heart of love that He rules our hearts in life and death. Then if our hearts' friendships be blessed by God in life, they must by Christ's heart be lifted up again from death to love. Leave me not, then, my friends; but love me. Love me truly, tenderly, nobly! Oh! love me thus; that

even beyond the grave our hearts may be again united in one heaven.

Brethren, let those who have no heart, or those who follow the heartless teaching of the Jansenist, select for their model some inhuman hero and try to save their souls in their own dark and difficult way. But, you, Christians, as model of your life, as test of truth, as criterion of worth, as standard of holiness, take your own gentle kind and loving Christ. He will, indeed, teach you truth and give you love. Then, come and contemplate One Who is a mirror without flaw, both of heart and holiness. But, look with your own eyes, not through the distorted imagery of others. The mirror is made for you, that in it you may behold your own true self in a divine reflection. Come and see!

There was a cottage long ago among the Gallilean hills, and in it with His Mother dwelt a Child whose name was Jesus. Jesus was the Great God of love and the Great Heart of kindness. For thirty years He was one heart with His Mother in their own sweet home of Nazareth. When the hour came that He should teach us how to love, He left His Mother's home, but took her love within His heart. He did not love her home the less, but He loved His mission more. He went forth to preach a gentle doctrine of forgiveness. He told of the good shepherd who followed and found the lost one. He told of the fond father who waited and wept for his prodigal child. He taught how the holy should love, for He allowed the head of the Virgin St. John to rest upon His bosom. He taught how the sinful should love, for He allowed the tears of the wanton Magdalen to fall upon His feet. O Christians! learn to love like Christ. He did

not praise the wild daughter of guilt for the heroism of her humiliation, but for the trustfulness of her return ; not for the austerity of her sacrifice, but for the tenderness of her sorrow ; nor does He pardon this woman who had fallen through love, because she now loves no more, but because she now loves so much. Our Great-Hearted Christ died for our love, and for our love He arose glorious and immortal from the dead, and for our love He lives ' always making intercession for us ' in Heaven, whither He hath gone to prepare a home for the resurrection of our hearts. Our Great-Hearted Christ lives now in Heaven, but not alone. His Mother is with Him once again as in the days of the old sweet home. Nazareth has come back again, not indeed with its sorrows, not with its shadow of grief, not with the pain of parting, not with the coming echo of ' Good-bye ! ' But Nazareth has come back again, the dear old Nazareth of long ago, for it is His Mother's home. It is one home again. He sees His Mother's happy smile and the tender message of her eyes. He sees the glorified radiance of her beauty and the incarnate beatitude of her breathing presence. They have one home again for ever. Their hearts were one until He died, and then for three long days, like centuries, His Heart was cold and had no love for her. But now His Heart is beating with immortal tenderness. They are One Heart again now and for evermore. In one Heaven. Yes ! in that happy land of mystery, where we, too, in our human life shall live again a life that will, by God's omnipotence, be blended in a divine unity of all that is sublime in ecstasy and of all that is simple in feeling. In one Heaven we shall live again,

sharing in the life of God, owning still the life of man. In Heaven our hearts shall live again, and if they live they love. Come back! come back my friends, nor bid me yet 'Good-bye!' We are only parting for a day. We must meet again. In the home of our Great-Hearted Christ we shall meet in the Eternal Resurrection of our love. Then, put thy hand in mine once more, dear friend, and tell me truly thou wilt love me still. Tell me thou wilt come back to me in Heaven to love me not less, but more. Come back! come back to our sweet home, dear heart, to have for ever, with our greatest love, our Christ, one home, one heart, one Heaven!

'O gentle Christ! I offer Thee my heart. O great Heart of Christ! I offer Thee my weakness. O tender Heart of Christ! I offer Thee my strength. I love Thee for Thy glorified Godhead. I love Thee for Thy human tenderness. I love Thee and I love Thy loves. If Thou wilt for Thee or Thine I would be as the dead stone of a bridge to lie unheeded underneath their feet while they pass safely unto Thee. But Thou, O Great-Hearted Christ, love me a little! Let me see Thee from afar that I may love and live. Do Thou, for Thy sweet Mother's sake, love me and mine! If my weak heart be wayward win me to love not less, but more. If my heart be true and loving, bless me and mine and bring us home together, O King of my heart, to be One Heart with Thee and Mary in Thine own Heaven!'

'BRIGHT AND BRAVE'

Drive away sadness far from thee; for sadness hath killed many and there is no profit in it.—Eccles. xxx. 24, 25

THE young look forward and the old look back. This is naturally most apparent as we approach the moment when the Old Year must die with the setting sun, and the New Year dawns with the morrow. Many and many a gaze is now wistfully turned towards the path which the pilgrim feet of the aged have trod, and many and many an eager glance is cast by inexperienced eyes upon THE UNKNOWN ROAD that attracts their hope. We may wisely pause to-night, at this turning point in our lifetime, to take one last look at the past before we bid it Good-bye, and in thought to draw aside the veil that hangs about the future.

In our actual day it is not easy to appreciate the relative value of those events which monopolise our attention by their present hurt or by their present charm, but even from a little distance we may behold, in the perspective of the past, how joys and sorrows have been grouped together and together gradually evolve into the unfolding of a history where both regret and thanksgiving become blended into one complete and constant motive for more practical prudence and for more earnest energy.

Looking back upon the outward world, as it dis-

appears from our living gaze to be submitted like other records of the dead to the cold scrutiny of the historian, we recognise that the expiring year has accentuated the characteristics of our age. One chief characteristic of our modern world, one under which most others may be grouped is the startling, the almost grotesque contrast which it presents between fundamental extremes.

One such contrast is that which exists between its wisdom and its folly. We are rightly proud of the science of our age. Its effectiveness is only surpassed by its accuracy, and its usefulness is only outshone by its magnificence. It needs no wire now to speak through the electric spark. It has learned to swim like the fish under the ocean and it is spreading its wings in order to fly like the bird. With more than wizard power it is transforming the fancies of wonderland into facts of our daily life. But OUR WISE AGE has got its follies ; follies of private whim unknown before, like those American marriage-feasts whose extravagance has neither the impressiveness of barbaric splendour, nor the charm of cultured magnificence, nor the kindness of bountiful opulence, but only the brainless, soulless ostentation of the pride of the full purse ; follies, too, of social craze, like the folly of France, where public justice and personal liberty, where the financial interest of the State and the private property of the citizen, where the welfare of the poor and the generosity of the wealthy, where respect for moral conscience and safeguards against moral depravity are being flouted, jeered at, jostled, down-trodden by a satanic sect in its mad warfare against Christ; follies even of science, whose wise men will not stop

within their own safe sphere, but will rush wildly out in order to contradict the Word of God.

But the follies of each dying age must disappear before the clearer light and keener search of each new age, and, although each new age will bring in turn new follies of its own, there shall yet remain, winnowed from the chaff of each succeeding century, the true wisdom of all the ages garnered into human harvest by the wisdom that is of God.

Another strange contrast is that which exists between its philanthropy and its war. On the one hand, it lavishly pours forth its treasure and it generously consecrates its time to ameliorate the lot of the poor, of the sick, and even of the criminal; nor is it satisfied with helping the suffering children of the human race, but it stretches its protecting arms over the brute. On the other hand, its peace is only a preparation for war, and the highest training of the citizen is for the slaughter of the soldier. Never before did history tell such appalling tales of reckless, ruthless, remorseless massacre as we read in the daily newspaper. The inspirations of military genius, the science of military destructiveness, the wealth of centuries of industry, and the valour of millions of men are being combined, concentrated, and hurled into HORRIBLE COLLISION in order to bring about the poverty of two peoples, the hatred of two races, the agonising grief of the womanhood of two Motherlands, and the agonising butchery of the manhood of two nations. Thanks be to the great, good God that, so far at least, we have not been sucked into this vortex of useless gold and fruitless heroism, of hopeless tears and of irreparable blood.

Again, there is a weird contrast between the sinfulness of our age and its decorum. Not only are the means and opportunities for wrongdoing multiplied and new facilities afforded, but new kinds of vice have been invented and evil influences bluntly and directly brought to bear upon the young and innocent. Yet our age is highly proper. For instance, signs of intemperance which some few years ago would have been overlooked or perhaps tolerated are now taken to be the disgraceful tokens of a downright drunkard. Again, nice names have been given to ugly sins and nice fashions have been found to cloak bad morals.

Finally, there is a contrast between the paganism of the age and its religion. In part the contrast consists in this, that the modern man who is a pagan is more thoroughly pagan than ever pagan before, while the modern man who is really religious is still more really devout. In part the contrast is also evident in the fact that many modern pagans borrow not merely the language but even the ideas of religion, while many Christians or even Catholics who would resent as an insult their being called by any other name, yet act and think and speak like pagans.

It is a strange age, eccentric, while sometimes abominable in its badness; but perhaps more admirable, whilst sometimes quixotic, in what it has of good. On the whole, although there may be much that we must deplore, yet there would seem to be very much for which we should thank God. The wider and clearer spreading of the LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE ought naturally to put before men's minds nobler ideals of life, and these are human helps that ought naturally

to turn men's thoughts and hearts to the light and the love of God.

When our thought turns away from the broad expanse of history, where lie the monuments or the ruins of the world that is dead, to watch each narrow path trodden by each separate soul, we find the lives of men strangely different in many ways, yet in some ways strangely alike. One path seems always bright with sunshine, another always draped in funeral gloom; one resonant with merry laughter, another disconsolate with silent tears; one easy with affluence and smoothened with success, another sterile, rugged, thorn-strewn, leading from chasm to chasm of failure. Yet the happiest soul is not always that which has the pleasantest path to tread; nor is the roughest road always the saddest when trodden by a bright, brave soul. One way in which most lives are much alike is, that they all, through their own mistakes, miss much of the brightness which they might have because they chiefly, or even only, look at what is dark. Joys are rarely realised, blessings are rarely appreciated, until they are gone; and, when they have been lost, they are remembered with ceaseless and sour regret. Sorrows to come are exaggerated by nervous anticipation; when present they are brooded over with morbid despair; and even when past they are still kept actual in their pain by useless recollection. That is neither wise, nor helpful, nor holy; yet it is not merely usual, it is almost universal; it will be found on reflection to be the case even with souls who at first sight might seem entitled to flatter themselves that they are ALWAYS BRIGHT AND BRAVE. To look at the bright side is wiser, better, healthier, happier than to look

at the dark side of life. We will dwell for some short time upon this thought.

Those fair sights or scenes of Nature upon which our gaze most loves to linger owe the power of their fascination, as well as the brilliancy of their beauty, less to the colour which things have than to the light which falls upon them. A colour will always win the admiration of the eye if it be seen through an atmosphere that suits it. No colour is without its own charm. But there is no colour that will not lose its own charm if it be shrouded in unfavourable gloom. In the lands of the bright, unclouded sun yellow is always golden, and red has always in it both the warmth and the body of molten metal. Yet there the fainter tints in which poets paint their tender tales are either wanting or they are pale or spiritless. In our rough Northern climes we scarcely know what crimson is; nor have we ever seen the true splendour of the scarlet sky; nor have we ever yet beheld the full glory of the golden corn. But those who dwell beneath the undimmed heavens have never dreamt of the many-motived passions of our clouds that frown with the awfulness of eternity, or weep with the ceaseless melancholy of man's time of tears; nor have their tenderest thoughts been ever lit with a tone as exquisite as is the mournful gray which in the morning rests wearily upon our mountains; nor have their deepest emotions been ever flushed, even in heart pictures, with a softness like the fresh growth of our grass.

Now, this is true not only in the world of physical fact, not only in the gloom or glory of the outward air, not only in the joy that dances with the sunlight

or in the grief that droops with the mist, but it is also true in the inward world of thought and feeling. It is true of the IMMATERIAL ATMOSPHERE of moral things. The appearance of such events as happen in our human life is much more due to the aspect under which we see them than to any quality which they themselves possess. It is not so much their nature as our standpoint, not so much their kind as our character, not so much their colour as our mood which gives its hue and its perspective to the judgment which we form. For, again, it is not so much its facts that make life dark or bright as the way in which we take them.

All things finite have both a bright and a dark side. All things are bright in so far as they are good. In so far as they are evil they are dark. Brightness and goodness are twin names for twin aspects of things. What is good is really lovable and therefore really bright. What is evil is really bitter, even though sweetened with honey; really counterfeit, even though skilfully painted; really dark, even though upon it should be reflected a radiance stolen from the sun.

Furthermore, not only have all things their own good and evil. They also have the possibility of being good or evil in reference to ourselves. Whatever is may by us be rightly taken or wisely left untouched; and so it may become to us the means of noble activity or of still more noble self-control. 'There is no evil so great but bears some good in its backward eddies.' If we look upon it in this light we look upon its brightness. If we look upon it only as it is an occasion of trial, pain, or sacrifice, we look upon it only just where the gloom falls. But still, as there is no good that

may not be misused, so neither is there any misfortune or sorrow, nay, nor is there any fault that may not become a STEPPING-STONE TO HIGHER GRACE and loftier worth. The wound, the scar, has its honour and its beauty. The ills of life, its battles, woes, and wounds—ay, even its ruined hope and palsied power—may have a glory and a charm too serene indeed and too sublime to catch the admiration of childish eyes, but yet so great as to command the highest homage and to call forth the deepest love of minds that have reached their manhood.

From this it follows that all things may be seen in shadow or in sun. For, as they have their bright and their dark side, we can certainly look upon one or upon the other. Mark well here, however, that, while there is truth on each side, the reasons for looking at one side or at the other are not of equal weight. We tend inevitably to turn our thought unfairly toward the actual troubles which press upon us and to forget their usefulness or their worth. The happiness that is to come seems far away, while the evils that threaten seem very near. If there be no pain of mind or pang of heart to torture us there are always anxieties to fret or griefs to harass, and these, however trifling they may sometimes seem to others, have substance enough to depress our energy and shadow enough to obscure our joy.

The atmosphere of human life is generally dull, often dismal, and if we would understand the true colour and character of things, we must allow for the false tints thrown upon them by sickly exhalations of the earth or by dreary vapours that hide the heavens. Wisely, then, we turn away from what

would give a view of life as unreal as it is unhealthy, in order to let our thought rest rather upon that aspect which is as accurate and as sound as it is beautiful and bright.

This already embodies another truth—namely, that looking at the bright side is not only the more pleasant way of taking human life, it is also THE MORE USEFUL. It is both these because it is the truer view; for, after all, the enthusiasm of youth is more accurate in the end than the cynicism of age. That the bright side is the more pleasant one to look at we need not pause to prove. It is evident that sunshine or shadow in the mind brings joy or heaviness to the heart. That it is more useful to look at the bright side is also plain. For it is written: 'Drive away sadness far from thee. For sadness hath killed many and there is no profit in it.' All men know that cheerfulness with joy gives hope; with hope, courage; with courage, strength. All men know that melancholy in the mind, like mist upon the mountain, clouds their sun and chills their soil, dims their hope and dulls their heart. Yet it is of no avail to show how much more pleasant and more useful it is to look at the bright rather than at the dark side of things, unless we can also show that such views are in fact correct. Now that way of looking at life which gives a healthy tone to the mind and a happy courage to the heart must needs be in keeping with the fit order of nature, and therefore in harmony with fact, and therefore true.

Yet we can find for this a more direct proof. All things are intended by God to work out our good, and our good is in reality identical with our happiness. In this life God never sends what we call misfortune

except in so far as it is useful or necessary for our good. Trials or troubles God never allows but with such previous aim and actual ordering as makes them, when we bear them as we ought, bud in joy and ripen into happy harvest. Mere punishment, as such, that is the warring down of evil, is for hereafter. But in God's present providence the real worth and real beauty of life only reach their full freshness and fruitfulness when they have been sown in tears. Yet even these tears, though dull and bitter at the time, become bright and sweet as dewdrops touched by sunrise, for their falling passes but their fruitfulness remains. They are, then, only BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE. Thus there is no evil in human life which may not yet be put to happy profit; there is no good but may be blessed. This is a very bright way of looking at human life. It is the only true way. Look, then, at the bright side.

To all this some people answer that the bright side is indeed the right one to look at, but that they find themselves hopelessly confronted with the dark, or they will say that they do look at things under their most favourable aspect, when in reality they shut themselves up obstinately in brooding gloom. In all such cases there is one chief characteristic—worry, and one chief cure—a resolute control of thought. In our age of over-anxious haste and over-harassed energy, when life is whirled forward at the maximum of high pressure in work and with the minimum of pause for rest, when men are mature at sixteen and worn out at thirty-five, when effort is let loose without guidance and spurred on without control, it is no wonder that the nerves should lose their steadiness,

the mind its balance, and the will its sedateness. No wonder that now there should be such fretfulness in thought, such sickliness in resolve, such fever in life. No wonder there should be worry. Worry, I understand to be, as a cause, 'useless thought about trouble,' with its consequent result of 'inward morbidness and outward peevishness.' Trouble, of whatever kind, is what casts a shadow over life. Now to take such shadow into consideration in a wise and healthy way never causes worry. That a man should meet his trouble face to face, measure it, weigh it, grapple with it, and by the invincible power of his spiritual will make of it no curse but a blessing, this is manly; and what is manly elevates and cheers, makes one sturdier, and therefore braver, and therefore brighter. But that a man, when he has already done what he can for his trouble, should return to it again and again, stare at it until his eye becomes dim, brood over it until his thought gets entangled, lament over it until his will grows despondent, shiver and shudder over it until his nerves are unstrung, hysterical, this is not manly. It is womanish. It is worry.

When you must think about trouble give it all the quiet time and SERIOUS THOUGHT that it needs. Fix beforehand some broad limit to this meditative study. Let it be real, downright, practical study. Meditate intently upon what you can do and ought to do in order to avert or endure or repair your misfortune or it may be your fault. Let not your thought rest, even for one moment, upon any point that is not practical. What is to be done? That is the question that you have got to ask and to answer. When you have reached the best road as you think to take, do

not keep looking back wondering, indeed, whether you be right or wrong. Do not decide in a hurry nor until you have thoroughly sifted the matter. But when you have once decided, turn your face resolutely forward, and inexorably set further reflection aside. If still you allow this trouble to haunt your nights with spectral shape, and to dog your days with importunate after-thought, your mind, like a wild bird, caged and terrified, instead of seeking to escape through some opening will beat itself helplessly against fatal bars; your energy will grow enervated yet restless; your resolution spasmodic, yet vacillating; your views morbid; your whole life wretched, wasted, worthless.

When trouble is over do not still cling to it. 'Let the dead past bury its dead.' If there be aught in the past that tells a wise lesson let it be listened to. If there be aught that is sacred to friendship let it be revered. If there should have been much love, far more than we then knew, for which we should thank God even though it be now lost, let its thought be cherished as a recollection to be brought with us to Paradise. But THE PAST IS DEAD. We may learn from it. We may love it. We must not, we cannot live in it. Our life is in the present. The past is dead. The future is unborn. The present alone is real. It is all that we have, all that we hold, all that is our own. We have our present work to do, our present load to bear, our present cross to carry, and our present comfort to lean upon. We have our present life to live.

You will, of course, look forward. But do not look at the future with the blear eyes of senile despondency,

nor with the superficial glance of infantile conceit. Look forward with the clear, practical gaze of robust anticipation, with the wise, quick intuition of a healthy tone of thought. Many people live in misery of their own imagining. With hankering morbidness they forecast trouble to come, so as to taste all its bitterness before ever it reach to real life. Should there be a dearth of definite impending evils to bemoan, they peer with still more nervous terror and with still more distrustful alarm into all the possibilities of woe. Others let their fancy riot amid foolish bubbles of fairyland. All their houses are palaces; their meals, banquets; their apparel, purple and fine linen; their women, beautiful as painted dolls; their men, magnanimous as tragic actors. Their thought is a theatre; their love an illusion; their hope a dream. Dotards live in the past; fools live in the future; men live in to-day. Be brave, then, in your actual day, and if you allow no SICKLY MIST or foolish vapour to hide or obscure its beauty you will behold how truly bright your life may be.

When all has been said I may be confronted with a soul that has suffered much; whose life has grown from grief to misery, from tearful dawn to tearless desolation; whose brain is bewildered; whose strength is benumbed; whose will is weak; whose heart is hard, sour, cynical, through fruitless waiting for kindness from men; whose hope only sometimes, and scarcely even then, dares to look for mercy from God; whose wretchedness cannot tell its tale and will not ask for sympathy. Before such sorrow I am silent. But I turn and point to where a Figure hangs from nails upon a Cross. When you have looked a while

upon that wide wound through which bursts forth with blood a love, divine as God yet human as your own heart, I may whisper 'Trust.' Then when you have wept I may still say to you: 'Trust.' Trust and you will learn. Learn and you will love. Trust! with the conflict will come the courage. With the difficulty will come the help. With the trial will come the strength. With the temptation will come the grace. Faith brings vision. Hope works its own fulfilment. Love abideth always.

Look up, then, not downwards. Whatever happen you can be good, and if good, bright. Things are not what they seem. What appears dark and dismal in life is only in the atmosphere. Things themselves are bright. We can draw them all into the patient and NOBLE WORKING-OUT of our own worth and soul-beauty. Even the shadows have their use and a loveliness of their own. Without struggle we should have no crown. Without sorrow we should have no sympathy. Without trust in trial we should never have the peace or glory of love that has been proven and is triumphant.

Look, then, upwards not downwards. Behold the light that floods forth from heaven. All things are good and all good that is true is bright, and all good that is great is beautiful. The sunshine is sent from God to show the truth of life. Look, then, at the bright side of things.

Then let the glad 'Te Deum' sound! Let the broad anthem of God's praise flood the air with waves of music, until the jubilant strains shake the earth with the torrent of their thankfulness. Let the glorious hymn of gratitude swell with beating rapture, blending

the Miserere of the past and the Alleluia of the future into one triumphant Te Deum Laudamus. Let the sacred canticle of our trust ring in unison with the angels until the material fibres of our being thrill and throb with the tone and fulness of the happy choir of the spirits. Let the sweet song of God's glory rise until the melody of the voice of Christ, touching the tenderest notes within our heart and striking the strongest strings within our soul, awaken once and for ever in our life the harmonies of the lost chord of His love. Let the glad Te Deum sound.

May God then bless the dear old past in all that was happy and good! May God forgive whatever in the past was weak or bad! May God guard and guide our future path! In the present, 'Drive away sadness far from thee, for sadness hath killed many and there is no profit in it.' Be bright and brave.

'LOVE GOD'

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.—Matt. xx. 11

THERE is a word so full of mystery that language can scarcely reveal the simple sense of it, yet so full of meaning that it enfolds within itself all the histories of the world. It is the echo of human life. It is the secret of heaven. The lost knowledge of it is the explanation of hell. It is a word that tells why men laugh and why men weep, why men work in joy and why men wail in woe, why hearts throb and why hearts break. It tells why there are sinners and why there are saints. It tells why the angels are ever in peaceful ecstasy of happiness and ever in exhaustless energy of rest. It tells why the earth was made and why it shall come to an end. It tells the aim of creation. It tells why God is good. It is the simple word love. Before the world was, love lived in God. For as the spoken Wisdom of the Godhead is the Word, the Son, so the breathed Spirit of the Godhead is the Eternal Love. When from God's loving breath created souls were wafted forth, love was sent with them in order to bring them back to the happy home from whence it came. But sin marred all by setting love astray, and so there are now in the world true love which is virtue and false love which is vice.

There is nothing in the world which has not been falsified by sin. Thus there are countless counterfeits of love. There is the mere hollow sound of the word itself when it is traitorously taken in vain. There is a flimsy semblance of it in the silly, emotional gush which so often chatters and glitters on the surface of small, selfish natures. There is a sort of hysterical raving, bred of overweening vanity and nourished on the fungus of decayed imaginations, to which in contemptible novels and poems this noble name is degraded. But worst of all the name of love is so defiled, flung so low in the mire, so shamefully turned to foul uses, that in the minds and mouths of men and women who follow the instincts of animals, this sweet, pure, majestic name comes to stand for another word which means the most animal desires of a brute.

True love means the outward impulse of an intellectual nature towards what is truly good. It is the outpouring energy of will begotten of indwelling knowledge of truth. For when an object great, noble, beautiful, perfect in its kind becomes by the vital reality of its presence in our thought a living development of our own life, it draws our own nature with all the weight of soul-attraction towards union with itself.

From the nature of a spiritual soul there flows an intellect of spiritual power which is not chained to time or space but can reach to the uttermost realms of truth. Yet the soul itself is finite, having within itself nothing that can satisfy, complete, perfect its own imperious wants, fathomless needs, and glorious possibilities. Thus we have a soul that is limited, yet has limitless thoughts; a soul that is in want, yet

has boundless aspirations ; a soul that is weak, yet has deathless hopes ; a soul that is faultful, yet has unimaginable ambitions ; a soul that is a creature, yet has God-like aims. Since, then, thought is the measure of will; since knowledge is the rule and standard, as it is the origin and the source of vital wish, it follows that if upon our mind there should dawn the brightness of some true perfection, or if some noble form should loom forth from vague horizons to stand in radiant reality before it, or if from out the hollow sounds and sights of distant dreams, before it with breathing beauty, with actual movement as full of musical grace as the voice and rhythmical wave of waters, with all the tenderest charms of fancy and with all the magnificent energy of fact, there should speak and flash a perfect excellence realised in life, then the deep unutterable yearning of our nature, its vast yet vacant stretching forth, its blind yet restless groping, its inborn need, its eager essence is roused, directed, loosened, and flung forward in the out-flooding force of a soul's quest, in the torrent-like tide of love.

But this is also true, that our love is so strong as to crush whatever is hollow in its grasp, so high as to look down on all that has flaw or failing, so pure as to loathe all that is base. It is so boundless as to grow weary of whatever would imprison it within narrow aims or chain it with fetters of pleasure back from the search of the infinite ideal which it can never forget, and which, while it remembers, it must love.

Thus, as our soul is finite in its nature yet infinite in its needs, it gravitates towards all that is true and good. All that it knows to be true it must bow before. All that it knows to be good it may love. What it

knows to be infinitely good it must love, for when such attraction is clearly and actually applied it overwhelms and absorbs all love's impulse. What it knows to be imperfect good it may love or not love as it likes. For there is attraction enough to arouse a soul but not enough to force it. A soul's wish can follow wherever there is good. It can stop short wherever there is failing. It is only a good which is infinite that can stir the love of a soul to the very depths of its essence.

Besides the spiritual impulse of will there is, in human life, the throbbing emotion of heart. That source from whence with quick, strong beat or fluttering pause there flow or ebb the warm waves of blood is also, through the strange mystery of one life shared by spirit and by clay, the sacred shrine of sympathy. As our soul, immortal and angel-like though it be, does not live apart but forms one true substance, one only being, with the body in which it dwells; so its thoughts are not mere bodiless ideas of intellect, but are clad in earthborn shapes of fantasy that glow or pale with colour or with shade, that have a real echo in our ear, that move with measurable speed, that weary with the strain of toil, that are refreshed by slumber; so, too, our human love is in its hope, not merely the soaring energy of a soul, but also the panting, throbbing heave and fall of an eager breast; or in its fear not merely the stately pausing or recoiling of a spirit, but also a freezing numbness that creeps along our veins; or in its joy not merely the glorious exultation of victorious will, but also the passionate flush of warm and bounding blood; or in its pain not merely the disappointed falling through

of an intellectual wish, but also the burning wound, the physical torture, the quivering anguish of a heart in agony; or in its happiness not merely a serene rapture such as angels know, but also an undulous thrill of gentle power with an answering sigh of unruffled rest, like the rising and falling of the bosom of a sea that sleeps under summer skies.

These twin tendencies of our nature are so intimately intertwined, so closely bound together, so fused in unity of life that one cannot be touched without an immediate harmony of reaction in the other; so that the love which is aroused in one arouses a kindred love within the other. Yet, as each has a kind of object which suits, and therefore wins its own nature, and as these objects may clash with rival charms, there is sometimes a weird conflict between the beauty of earth and the beauty of spirit, between the fondness of our heart and the resolution of our soul.

Even when love is one current set in one direction there is a wide difference between the relative value which we set on worth and the intensity of our affection for it. Just as a stream may flow towards a given point with the slow pace of level waters, or with the headlong whirl and crashing violence of a cataract, so our love may tend towards an object with sluggish step or with intense speed. The appreciation of good depends altogether on our choice, because it is the act of deliberately placing one good above another. The intensity of our pursuit of good depends only indirectly on our choice, because it is directly determined by the attraction which the object in question exercises on us. It is, then, possible to love

God above all, while at the same time we not only have no feeling of love, but even our spiritual will has, in its impulse towards Him, less of bright and rapid intensity than there is in our affection for some creature for which, however, we have incomparably less real esteem. Yet the natural order, and therefore the right aim of human life, is that the fondness of our heart should add its bloom and warmth to the excellence of our spiritual love, and that the love which is noblest should be also most intense. Indeed, our weak human way of rising from matter to spirit, of lifting ourselves by means of the sense and feeling of earth to the thoughts and desires of heaven, brings with it the need of winning our hears to help our will to love what is truly good.

Therefore is it that our Redeemer in human sympathy with our human nature reminds us of the first and chiefest law of all: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' For twining all the fervour of our heart towards Him our soul will kindle with more intense fire, and then our mind will look with all its eager thought, and then with ceaseless interchange of happy impulse our heart and soul will grow until they fill our life with all the strength of love.

Wherefore to wisely and happily set in motion the power of our love we will think of God the lovable. His love is not in mere words but in His works; He is our great, good God; His love is not in the weak emotion but in infinite energy; He is our great, strong God; His love is not an absent disregard but an ever-present tenderness; He is our great, kind God; His love is no hollow claim, no transient charm, no frail

attraction, for He is uncreated splendour, He is unclouded loveliness, He is eternal love, He is God the beautiful. . . .

Let us first recall to mind the homely truth that love consists much more in work than in word. Let us then reflect that as love is the outpouring of heart and soul, so its action and its evidence, its aim and its result, are all in the offering of its gifts. But we cannot truly love things that are without thought, because they are no more than means and thus have no good in them but that of usefulness. We can rightly love only objects that are intellectual, because they alone are worthy of the devotedness of a soul. Now this devotedness which is love itself is the first gift given by one that loves, and the only fitting return for such a gift is love.

Hence, perfect love means a mutual generosity of impulse, a mutual interchange of deepest and noblest energy, a mutual sharing in unselfish happiness, a mutual rivalry of benevolence, a mutual union in the lifting up of life. But a love that gives itself must needs bear with it in its mission of tender homage all inward gifts that it has and all outward gifts that it owns.

Thus whoso has wisdom will with love bring knowledge. Whoso has wealth, or honour, or talent, or power, or other gift will from useful help to graceful homage, from practical service to reverent tenderness, from skilfulness of hand to sympathy of heart give all else with the first great gift of love.

Ponder, then, with bowed down awe and softened spirit upon the almost wasteful benevolence and almost reckless affection of Him who loved us first and

loved us most. Ponder upon the gifts of our great, good God.

Our knowledge is so dim, our energy so fitful and so easily relaxed, we are so bewildered by the phantoms of imagination and so weighed down by matter that we are prone to attend only to present trifles that actually strike our senses, and to pay no heed to the sublime realities of the future and the past; we are in danger of exaggerating so much the slight obstacles against which we stumble during our pilgrimage through time, as to foolishly and ignobly think them worth comparing with the happy rest and exuberant sweetness of our Eternal Home.

In this way it happens that very many undervalue the benefit of existence. Yet think of its true meaning. It is not only the lifting of an intellectual creature from the absolute insignificance of nothing to the dignity of self-possessed being; not only the calling forth from the abject void of unreality to the actual presence of potency and to the actual pledge of power; not only the kindling, in place of darkness, of an unquenchable light, and the breathing, in place of death, of unconquerable love; but it is the gift of the mastership of the earth and of the ownership of a soul; it is the robing of a spirit with truth, the crowning of a spirit with freedom. Only the infinite power of God could give a soul's life. Only the infinite wisdom of God could draw forth a soul's intelligence. Only God's love could reverence a soul's choice. God gave us life that we might live; immortal life that we might live for ever. God gave us with our life the strength, the power, the impulse, and the law of love. But God would not rule our love by force, as He rules

the harmonious movements of the dead stars; for our life is love, and a forced love is false. That some should make their own existence an evil by their own free will, setting the curse of hate upon what God has blessed in love, this does not lessen but magnifies the gift of God. That of the intellectual stars which God had set in heaven some fell, proves how a creature's choice of hell may follow upon God's choice of the noblest gift in God's own giving, the choice of winning a spirit's own perfection by true knowledge and therefore by free will.

Existence is not like some one great gift, only one and given once for all, but with it come and on it follow countless helps to strengthen it, countless means to magnify it, countless pleasures to make it sweet, countless attractions to make it easy, countless impulses to bear it onward, and countless charms to crown it. These do not come one by one, nor in stinted measure only, nor only at stated times, but in ever-crowding and ever-exhaustless multitudes they twine through our daily life, nourishing it like the air which, unconsciously even in our sleep, we breathe, warming it like the unfelt heat of the sun, giving it buoyancy and brightness like the blood that ebbs and flows unheeded in our veins, making it always the source as well as the subject of gifts which no finite power could fashion, no finite love bestow. Thus from the distant days of childhood, pure as dawn in spring-time, sublimely simple and exquisitely fair as far-off mountains, when the light was always lovely and the shadows were always soft, when even the clouds were beautiful and even tears glistened with sunshine that came laughing back; from those days

of innocence and peace to the very hour we live in now, there have been gifts too multitudinous to even number, too sacred for speech. Health and all material goods, talent and all intellectual powers, character and all moral worth, love and all heart blessings, whatever earth or spirit, heart or heaven has been to us or done for us is the gift of our great, good God. Ah! . . . Yes, there have been sorrows, too—pains, trials. There has been the anguish of life and the agony of death. . . . Yes . . . yes . . . there has been sorrow; but take the sin from the sorrow and there will remain only gentle dew to soften sympathy, not the harsh bitterness of grief. Take sin from sorrow, and there will remain only the gift of God. Sin is the cause of all real evil in our lives. God made all that is good. 'He openeth His hand and filleth every creature with benediction.' We made sin and sin made sorrow. But behold here the mysterious power of God's love. It grows with strange intensity when thwarted. While man lives he cannot conquer God's love. Sin, even sin, is only a claim for greater mercy. One tear, one sigh, one wish can win back grace, and grace is the love of God.

Thus, when the gift of creation seemed to have been ruined by sin a greater love brought a greater gift, the gift of our Redeemer. Our Redeemer, the God Man, the Word made Flesh, brought God's wisdom so near to us that it spoke with the voice of a child and showed God's love so plainly to us that we could see it in an opened Heart. Our Redeemer changed all things. We were lifted up to be very brothers of our God, to share His own Mother's love with Him, to live by the bread of His Body, to drink

of the wine of His Blood, to follow Him hereafter to the home of vision and love. But there was a deeper wonder still in the coming down of God to soften hardship with His own tears, to consecrate pain by His own suffering, to comfort mourners by the compassion of His own most dolorous Mother, to wash away sorrowful sin and sinful sorrow with His own Blood, to bless love with His own Heart. This great gift was fruitful, too, through all the hours of our lives, from Baptism to First Communion, and thence in all those sweet, winning whispers, strong aids, tender recallings, and shielding graces known only to Him Who loved us first and loved us best until now.

When from out dark distances where earth and heaven seem to meet in one impenetrable gloom a storm sweeps forth and bursts upon us, tearing rough trees to shreds, whirling round buildings till they rock and totter if they do not fall, with the savage roar of its fury snatching up, overthrowing, or shattering all things with an unseen hand of satanic strength; when the clouds crash over the quaking ground in an anarchy of uproar, in the din and violence and thunder of elemental war; when the rain floods down in waves wild as the crests of the sea, hard as hissing hail; when the blinding lightning falls in lurid sheets of flame or darts like a loosened demon with the forked fury of a serpent and blasting spear of fire; then, amidst the discord, the frantic upheaval, the torrent of rage, and the bewildering terror men know that God is strong.

When, standing upon some high mountain peak, one looks up through cloudless distances, through the blue that has no boundary, through a height that has

no limit, understanding that there are around and beneath as well as above us spaces vague and full of awe; when one looks down through floating fragments of the clouds, where great cities of men sparkle like insignificant pebbles, where the realms of nations appear like the paltry spans of land they are, where primeval rocks rise up over dizzy precipices and sheer chasms, where mountains stand in their Titan strength gazing from under their eternal crown of snow, with their cold, hard glance of pitiless ice and with the relentless frown of their cliffs, down over the little fitful, changeful scene of human life below, one will think that then men may silently look down too, and see that indeed God is strong.

Or, if while we stand above, some loosened snow from a higher peak should shake and shatter and slip along, whirling the snow that it falls upon into a contagious frenzy, growing into a mountainous mass of flashing motion, gathering size and strength and speed at every headlong bound, with a crash like thunder and with the treacherous grasp of a whirlpool, smiting us with the stroke of its panting breath as it passes, seeking to seize us with the after-gust of the air that it overwhelms for a moment, till it clashes and struggles and stops with a heaving of earth and a rending of echoes upon the buried homes of men, then we can believe that God is strong.

When far out over an immense wilderness of ocean the confused and mingled mass of waters from the clouds and waters from the sea is flung through darkened space by the grasp of the hurricane; when there burst upward from the abyss loosened mountains of liquid, giant slaves broken out in distraught,

rebellious, lawless riot, now escaping down away back in withdrawn panic and pause of terror, now returning and pursuing in fresh paroxysms of maddened anger with sweeping, bounding, whirling, eddying, coiling, recoiling billows as black as hate or as white as rage; in the crashing shock of the crested wave, in the stinging stroke of the spray, in the tumultuous inpour of water, in the roar of storm above and the thunder of tempest beneath, and the deafening din all around, as the wild wind shrieks in loud lament or hisses threats of death through the rigging; as the terrified, mangled vessel, trembling, straining, quivering, groans and gasps like a living creature in agony, then, in the hand of the hurricane, men realise that God is strong.

These are evidences which show the strength of God to those who otherwise will not see, and tell it to those who otherwise will not hear. But those whose gaze is frank and honest, unblurred by passion, and undistorted by pride, behold in all His works the glory of the power of their Maker. For all things made are proofs of Omnipotence, for they were called forth from nothing; and all things that exist are proofs of Omnipotence, for they are upheld from nothing; and all things that act are proofs of Omnipotence for, as their being is nothing unless it lean upon Omnipotence, so, too, their action is nothing unless its created and dependent energy be shared and carried out by the uncreated and self-existent efficacy of God. Thus, in everything and everywhere, God's infinite strength is put forth to labour and to work for us. His gifts are never borrowed, never old, never valueless, for in His own Hand hath He fashioned them for us, and from His own Hand they are ever freshly

brought to us, and with His own Hand do they gain for us the preciousness of gifts, not only lovingly given but lovingly wrought by the loving labour of the King.

Wherefore throughout creation our great, strong God works in the gifts of His love. He labours with such resultant effect, with such unimaginable energy as would weary and utterly waste any strength that were less than absolutely infinite. He works with such supreme dominion as can search down to all nothingness, with such resistless majesty as can reach out to all reality; He works with equal efficacy in the silent crumbling of a rock as in the quick shock and volcanic shuddering of an earthquake; He works with equal majesty in the sprinkling of the dew as in the immense upheaving of the ocean tide; He works with equal magnificence in the simple blossom of a wild flower as in the painting of heaven's canopy with scarlet and with gold; He works with equal supremacy in the tiniest wave of a ray of light that touches invisible atoms of ether with infinitesimal motion as in the vastness of boundless space where enormous suns hurl and flash their mighty mass with unerring, unswerving, with unabated speed, in circles of fabulous distance; He works with equal glory in the uplifting of a blade of grass as in the dazzling beauty of a seraph. As, therefore, from what is lowliest to what is noblest, there is nothing that came not from His power, and as from what is weakest to what is mightiest there is nothing that can act but through His strength, so in all God's gifts there is not only the token and the proof, there is also the actual energy, the ceaseless work, the infinite labour of His love.

Again, not only is God the Giver of all good gifts, not only does He put His infinite power forth, in all and ceaselessly working for us, but with infinite kindness He comes Himself to offer them. For He does not dwell apart in majestic distance and reserve, sending us favours only by means of His servant creatures, but He Himself in all His gifts and in all His works is ever present. Nor is it even as though He merely stooped in mother-like tenderness over our sleep or guarded our wakeful hours with strong yet unseen hand, but He is nearer still, for He is present in the very air that fans our cheek or fills our breathing life with freshness. He is present in the ground that bears us up, in the very nerve and muscle of our bodies. He is present in the fathomless blue of the heavens, in the softly floating clouds, in the purple mountains, in the restless ocean, in the shady trees, in the merry sunshine, in the bright grass, in the lovely flowers, in the warm flow of our blood, in the thinking of our brain, in the throbbings of our heart, in the inmost life and essence of our spiritual soul. Ever present in wise watchfulness, ever present in strong support, ever present in gentle help, ever present in tender providence, we live and move and have our being in the living love of our great, kind God.

It is a noble use of thought to ponder over the benefits of God, to realise the generosity of His ever active, ever present love. By such reflections we are drawn to give Him the homage of grateful hearts. But there is a nobler meditation still which lifts us from the nature of His gifts to the nature of the Giver, which in the attractions of His works reveals the wonders of the worker, which in the charm and

melody and grace of whatever in creatures delights us, beholds the mirrored image of Uncreated Beauty. For there is nothing good or great, nothing admirable or lovable, which does not come from the infinite perfection as well as from the infinite power of Him, Who is not only the Maker, but also the Archetype of all, not only the First Cause but also the First Ideal. Thus, whatever is beautiful on earth is not only the effect and result, not only the proof and the evidence, but it is the reflected light, the imitated charm, the adumbrated image, the likeness, however feeble or faint or imperfect, of something infinitely more fair in the nature of God the Beautiful. Thus in the freshness of the springing grass, in the golden richness of the corn, in the charm and beauty of all flowers, from the simple blossoms of field or hedge to the luxuriant loveliness of the garden, from the quiet gladness of the daisy or fragrant breathing of the hawthorn to the dazzling purity of the lily, the perfume and red of the rose, or the exquisite tints of the orchid; in the growth and noble character of all trees, in the gracefulness of the birch or of the beech, in the grandeur of the chestnut, in the flowing splendour of the lime tree, in the stateliness of the pine, in the majesty of the oak; in the lines and colour of all the landscape, in the fertile bosom of the plain, in the undulations of the hills, in the magnificence of the mountains, in the prettiness or splendour of realities which are near, or in the dreamlike hues that embalm and empurple the distance, in the gay ripple of the river, in the resounding awfulness of the ever-inviolate sea, in the solemnity of moonlight, in the hushed calm of the darkness, in the glinting, sparkling,

exulting, life-giving, enrapturing rays of the sunshine; in all things that are lovely, and most of all in all the loveliness of life in which what is fairest in form and figure, what is most tender in hue and noble in symmetry, becomes the breathing shrine of thought and love; in these, and in all else that wins the sight and woos the heart, there is the pictured beauty of a beauty infinitely more beautiful than all. Yet, furthermore, whatever there has been of sublime in the treasured histories of heroes, or whatever there has been of pure and of serene in the unwritten lives of the innocent; whatever there has been of magnanimous or of meek, of true, of staunch, of lofty, of brave, of patient, of noble, in the character of strong men, or in the character of gentle women; whatever there is or has been of admirable in the devotedness of unselfish hearts, in the steadfastness of friendship, in the unwearying sweetness of mother's love: all this is only the faint outline and dim adumbration, the feeble and far-off echo, the reflected light, the pictured though failing image of what, in God, is true without any fault, real without any flaw, perfect without any dissonance or without clash or shadow, complete without any weakness, boundless without any want. So that there is nothing throughout creation which can dawn in light upon our mind, or win by love the impulse of our soul, which does not bear within it a sacred message full of truth and full of happiness from Him Who alone is all good, all-loving, and all-beautiful.

Were it not folly to gaze in dull astonishment upon a beam of shadowed light which had struggled through darkened windows, when with one easy movement we could exult and revel in all the glancing,

glowing radiance of the sunshine as it plays among the clouds of the happy heavens or rests on the verdure of the happy fields ? Again, what folly it would be to stoop to drink the waters of some stagnant pool when close beside it the cool freshness of a spring should burst out and along in sparkling purity and transparent freshness. . . . How much greater folly is it not, then, to stare and wonder at created charms as if in them our soul could ever find content, when from the reflection we can lift our thoughts to the very Sun of Brightness, and from the murky beauty which we meet on earth mount up and satisfy our thirsty love with the very Fountain of Eternal Life ?

Oh ! do not live in idle dreams ! Do not sacrifice existence in searching after phantoms. Do not love so much the gold and crimson of the evening clouds, as to droop in hopeless darkness when their splendour has passed away. Do not so love earth's flowers, even the fairest, as with them to pine and fade for ever. Do not think there is any voice you hear so sweet as to be sweetest. Do not believe that any heart can speak with kind eyes so rapturous a language to your own, but that there is a kinder glance and a deeper heart and a greater love of which all you now know is only reflection, echo, message. Clouds are only vapour and their glory is not their own. Flowers are only frail tissue, and their beauty does not last. Eyes grow dim and hearts grow cold, and melody dies away on the dark, chill, silent earth. But, beyond the everlasting hills, there is a land where is never gloom; where there is no other change in beauty of colour than a varying freshness of tint and of hue, delighting at once and reposing with new charms

that always attract, and with old charms that never weary; where there is no other change in beauty of sound than the lull or the flood of exquisite harmonies which beat like the throb of a happy heart passing always from joy to joy; where all is secure with Eternal Life, serene with Eternal Light, rapturous with Eternal Love, because it is the Home of God the Beautiful.

Oh! do not live in idle dreams! Do not live for empty mist. Do not live for passing glamour. Above the fading and the false, above the hollow and the unsubstantial, lift up your thoughts; lift up your hearts. Love not too late. Wait not till you lose your love to falsehood and to wretchedness. Love not too late. Love while the sounds of all creation echo to your heart, love, love. Love while the sights of all creation speak to your soul, love, love. Love God Who made all things that are lovable, all things that are beautiful. Love God Who is so lovable. Love, love God the Beautiful.

O Beautiful God! Who art in all things good to us; in all things strong for us; in all things kind with us; O God! Who art mirrored in all beauty that we love, O teach us to know Thee in all things, that thus with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our strength, loving Thee, we may at last see Thee in Thine own beauty, face to face, O beautiful God, loving Thee, loving Thee, loving Thee for evermore.

THE PLOUGH

No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.—Luke ix. 62.

THE Plough is an emblem of work. It does not mean the gentle craft of needle or of loom. It does not imply any wide power of scientific skill, nor any finished excellence in art. It is not for the fireside nor for the factory, not for the studio nor for the study ; it is merely the token of the tillage of the soil.

The steel-tipped ploughshare cleaves the clay, and as from its shoulder the sod falls, folded back, a fresh furrow appears where the scattered seed may be caught to the bosom of the earth, and quickened into food for men. All husbandry is in that, and upon husbandry rest, as upon their first foundation, the peace, prosperity, and power of the commonweal. There is no work, however stupendous in its strength or beautiful in its delicacy, however lofty in intellect, titanic in action, curious in science, or attractive in art that does not lean from its faint beginning to its full success upon the humble service of the Plough.

The Plough's work is plain work. It is no pastime fitted for dainty fingers ; no exercise suited to picturesqueness in dress, or affectation in attitude. It means the mud upon one's boots and the clay upon one's hands. The labour of a peasant, guiding the onward effort of his horses and steadying the

downward bent of his ploughshare—that is all. Most men think it very vulgar work, and so it is in one way, because any man, however coarse, uncouth, ignorant, or dull, if he be not a cripple nor a simpleton, can do it. Many men despise it, but in this they are wrong ; for no man's life can be manly, much less can a man's life be noble, unless he do a great deal of work that is quite as plain as ploughing. For not only the honest doing of duty, and the earnest earning of honour, but also the fulfilment of brave aims, and the realisation of exalted ideals, depend always, and depend absolutely, upon the commonplace tillage of character.

No man can be a worldling during the week and a saint on Sunday. He cannot do one great and generous deed once a year, and continue for the rest of the twelvemonth to lead a mean and selfish life. One must always be one's own self, whether this self be like a field that is tilled or like a moorland that is waste with weeds. A man cannot change his character, as he can change his coat, or as he might shake off his surroundings. His character is the kind of self he is. This is no result framed by outside circumstance, no effect fashioned by unwonted accident. It is the outcome of vital forces from within. It is a growth. Now a man may grow in evil or he may grow in good. But however this be, it is a growth, and like all other growth it is gradual. The kind of man one is, that is to say, one's self, one's character, is the fruit, not of one hour, nor of one influence, but of imperceptible atoms of acts countless as drops, constant as dust, and common as clay. Wherefore a man's own worth is measured, as it is made, by his own work, and his own work is in the everyday doing of homely details

that develop, like living sap, into strong fibre and sweet fruit. Thus the good growth of life must be sown by the simple tracing of trifles like furrrows that together bring fertility.

The Plough's work is slow work. The heavy horses trail along with plodding sinew and lingering hoof. From end to end they leisurely pass, then tediously turn, and with the same steady tread of concentrated yet controlled vigour come back. Furrow after furrow is dug. The rusty green and knitted surface of the sod are gradually cloven and down-turned, leaving the dark, soft mould fit for seed, until over all the broad surface of the field is written, in long, deep, straight lines the record of patient days.

No! 'the race is not to the swift.' Man must work. Much more, must man wait. Even though you should lift one weight or secure one prize with one effort or by one rush, you cannot, with the strength of a saint's resolve, nor with the intensity of an angel's thought, suddenly form your character. After a furrow or two has been traced a weakling will sit down and weep, because he sees no sign of golden ear or stately stem to show how he has laboured. A man will work, and not weep but wait. There is more manliness in the patient and persistent ploughing up of old faults than in the buying of Paradise with one sharp but short pang.

The Plough's work is hard work. In the wet, dreary morning, when one knows that it is day because it is less dark than was the night, when the hopeless clouds droop until they mingle with the brooding mists, when a few pallid leaves sigh piteously as they still cling to the hedgerow or flutter like the ghosts

of dead joys across the dank path, the ploughman goes forth to his work. Through weary hours of the dim and cheerless day, through drenching wet and pitiless wind, while his numb hands are slipping on the handles, while his clogged feet are sinking in the soil, from side to side, from end to end, he works his monotonous way. Or, in the frost, when the east wind smites his cheek with driven flake and stings his fingers with the venom of its cold, when the panting of his horses drifts like a cloud and his own breathing fastens on his hair and beard in icicles, he still plods laboriously on. Stiff, in the comfortless evening, soiled and jaded, he returns home to rest, in order to begin his work again on the morrow.

The simple toil of making one's life fruitful in good is sometimes very hard. Not, indeed, to characters of sand that offer no resistance, as they are incapable of effort; not to characters hard and unfeeling as rock, and as sterile, but to characters of great heart, and therefore of deep feeling, of great power, and therefore of strong passion, as they can bear either tangled luxuriance of weed or wealth of overflowing harvest, so, too, is their ploughing toilsome.

It is hard, very hard sometimes, during the soul's winter-time to do one's rugged and dreary duty. When there is no sunshine, but only a sullen frown on the face of the future; when numb neglect or bitterness, hard as hail and chill as sleet, ceaselessly exhaust or harass our courage; when the moral atmosphere we breathe is clammy as fog or harsh as frost; when our strength staggers despairingly amid slippery weaknesses of will; when the point of our resolution clashes repeatedly against some rock of inborn fault, or against

some root of deep-grown feeling ; when our hold gets slack because there is no warmth within our heart ; when our aim gets unsteady because there is a dimness within our very soul ; when our mistakes are multiplied until we grow dizzy with depression ; when our faults appear to flourish all the more for the labour we have squandered ; when a sleek scribe overwhelms us with advice, as he sits down to watch us from the road, or when a comfortable Pharisee maddens us with pious platitudes as he loiters near to see us stumble ; when we feel too weak to work and too worthless to pray, then it is very hard to Plough.

But there is no type of human labour as useful as the Plough. It gives hardihood to the man, healthiness to the soil, and harvest to the home.

Toil is the making of all true human worth. Hard toil, the making of whatever worth has grit in it. Fairness of feature, sweetness of voice, gracefulness of gait, are much admired of men. Yet in spite of the worldly world we may assume that the most admirable quality of a man is not in his likeness to a rose, to a gazelle, or to a nightingale. Such gifts are quite outside the soul, nor do they make a man one whit more worthy than does wealth. Even the natural beauty of the spirit, its keenness of intellect, forcefulness of will, or charm of character—these are gifts given, not gifts gained. But true worth is own worth, and own worth is of one's own making under God. A dullard may be more high-minded than a divine. A peasant may be more noble-hearted than a prince. Some of the most beautiful of women have been the most accursed of human serpents. Some of the most swinelike of men have been brilliant wits or lucky

warriors, profound statesmen or powerful kings. But many a simple maid has been a very angel in staunch innocence. Many a poor rustic has been a hero in generosity ; in patience and in purity a saint.

Now as each man has his own character so does each man get his own chance. Whether he use or misuse his chance, whether his character become healthy or sickly, noble or foul, depends upon whether or no he put his hand to the plain, slow, hard labour of life.

With the rough hand of the toiler, not with gloved effeminacy, with his tanned cheek, keen eye, and stalwart stride, not with pale, listless affectation, we find the man, that is, one whose robust healthiness has pluck enough to suffer and grit enough to drudge.

This chance given to man of making his life manly bears its message of warning as well as its meed of encouragement. Every bright quality has its shadow. every strong power has its corresponding peril. As a power is great, so does it bring, in proportion to the greatness of its privilege, the greatness also of its proportioned peril, and so does it, with the talent which it bestows, impose a duty of corresponding toil. Small and narrow natures may be good or bad, but they cannot be great. They are mean in their vices or they are pharisaical in their virtues. But great characters having great power and great impulse must be great in evil if they be not great in good. If they sin they sin like Satan. But they may be great in good, for if they put their strong hand to the Plough there will appear, in time, within their soul a golden growth of beauty in the sight of heaven, and a blessed fruitfulness of love to gladden the hearts of men.

Again, the soil itself, however good, becomes hard, barren, sour if it be not cultivated. Nay! the richest soil gives rankest weed when it is left in idleness to rot with wasted wood or to reek with stagnant water.

Oh, many and many a man, moulded of nature's best clay, fashioned of finest fibre, born to be noble above his fellows, nurtured with healthiest care, guarded by holiest influence, enamoured of pure ideals and conscious of chivalrous vocation, innocent, fearless, talented, magnanimous, sank yet afterwards far, far below the lowest level of men whose inborn type was coarse, and whose ingrained bent was brutal. Oh, most sad of all sights upon this wide, wicked earth! the prince-like and beautiful face of the youth that had copied in boyish line the very likeness of his mother's maidenhood, that had caught in strong curve the actual expression of his father's manliest mood, now blurred with sinful flame and blotched with sinful fever, become unto the image of the human ape! Oh, that the smile which once had reflected the ethereal sweetness and strength of purity should have faded for ever, and that in its stead there should be seen, alas! alas! stamped upon those very features the hideous leer of reckless, shameless, brutish degradation!

Yes, it is true that this appalling fate of such endearing promise is most often brought about by the silly Jansenism or by the selfish spitefulness of small and contemptible natures who, with the instinctive cunning and venom of insects, make maddening war on characters that have broad minds, big hearts, and hot blood. Yes, it is very true, it is very terrible,

and it is very strange. How can our great, good God look on without direct and drastic cleansing of the earth while such dread havoc is being wrought among great souls by the brainless and heartless parasites that infest His people? How can He permit that the wicked world should be ably led by great men who have fallen, and that the brotherhood of the good should be so often crippled and cursed by the tyranny of petty ascetics that have crept up? We do not know, nor shall we know until hereafter, when God Himself will deign to justify His Providence to the mind of the universal assemblage of men.

But this we do know, that no fault of others can justify our fall. Others may, and indeed often do, place us in the terrible alternative of being either heroes or brutes, angels or demons. But when it is so a man must face the alternative. As his trial is more severe, so must he be more brave. As his difficulties increase, so must he be more staunch. As his ploughing becomes harder, so must he more resolutely lay hold of his Plough with the grasp of a true man.

See, the truest test of greatness in a man is in that he serve none but God. It is in his being independent not only of bad men who hate his aims, but of good men too who are jealous of his endeavours. A great man is one who makes even the meanest trifles of his life great by the manliness of his courage in time of depressing trial; and, in time of exasperating teasing, by the manliness of his patient toil.

Everywhere round the ruins of monasteries we find old fields which, coarse once and sour, as is still the neighbouring sod, were cultivated by slow yet persistent monks, until at last their constant spade

and quiet ploughshare won from the reluctant clay the gratitude of a fruitful soil. Thus, too, the plain, slow, hard labour of your early life will bring you, in maturer years, the peaceful possession of a strong, true, noble character. It will bring you, in the day that has no tear, no toil, no darkness, and no dearth, the harvest of the home of God.

The great, tall sheaves of golden corn rest in the quiet autumn air. The meadows that have yielded their store of hay for the winter-time are green again with the after-grass. There is a sense of repose in the fields where the scythe has mown, or the sickle reaped, and all along the pleasant paths. For the work of the winter has not been in vain, nor has all that unknown and unhonoured labour of the Plough been spent without its recompense of present peace and comfort for days to come. Yes, they 'who sow in tears shall reap in joy.'

Put your hand to the Plough, then, with the grip of a man who means work. Do not blaspheme, nor blame God for your weakness. It is not His grace that fails you. It is your own will that gives way. You are weak. Yes, you are very weak. But it is your own fault if you remain so. You can become strong if your really wish it. Your strength or weakness is in your will, and your will is your own. You have always help enough from God. You can get as much more as you earnestly ask for. But God's help requires self-help. If you wont work, God will not do your work without you. Be earnest! You would be earnest in trying to get bread to eat if you were starving. You would be earnest in escaping from a burning house if you had just felt the first touch of the flame. That

is the sort of earnestness you must have. But you do not feel in earnest! Feel? Bah! are you a man or are you an hysterical girl? If you are not in earnest, make yourself in earnest. Concentrate your powers upon one point. Intensify your energy into one effort. Single out some one definite and emphatic resolution. Embody in this resolution all the determination of your character. Fling into it all the force of your whole being. Let loose upon it every breath of your life, every beat of your heart. Hurl at it in one gigantic outburst every atom of strength that is in you. Repeat this resolution again and again. With hammer-blows of will drive it into your very soul. By ceaseless reiteration identify it with your very self. Pray! Struggle! Strive! Smite! Never hesitate! Never slacken! Lay hold of it, man! The very effort will awaken energy. Energy will create strength. Strength will determine courage. Courage will secure victory. Then, man, take a good grip of your Plough!

Hold on with the grasp of a desperate man. Through the seething surf and the stinging spray, blinded and dazed with the shock and the whirl of waters, groping in frenzy and gasping convulsively, the drowning man clings to the plank he has caught. So do you hold to your resolution. With tight-set teeth, with clenched fist, with the force of madness, with the fixedness of despair, hold to it! Hold to it not for one day, nor only for one year, but hold to it until your fingers stiffen upon it still in your death-struggle! God alone can relax your hold. He will not. Nor man nor devil can. Hold on, then, man!

Now, look forward, like a thorough man. You

may have made many a mistake, but you will not mend matters by looking back. You may have done many a wrong, but staring at the evil you have done will not set it right. Your heart may be heavy with remorse; your soul overladen with guilt. But the past is gone; it is dead. There is no use in sitting down to cry over it. You may have lost all your life up to this moment. You may have to begin your ploughing all over again. But however things may have been the past is dead, you are living, your work is waiting, and you have no time to lose. Forward, then!

Still, as you bravely, though wearily, plod on in your wet and heavy furrow, the memory of the past may rise before you like a dream-cloud. Eyes that once spoke their love to you may gaze upon you in silent wistfulness or reproach. Even the dead may arise 'mid the scenes of other days to remind you of all that you have known and loved and lost. Yet although heart-mists dim your eye, and heartache wring your very soul with anguish, do not look back. May God, in His great mercy, forgive the bad past! May God, in His most tender kindness, bless the dear, dead past! Oh, may He leave us still, to comfort us in lonely days, the sacred memory at least of the lost love that we shall meet on earth no more! O gentle Christ! leave us, to cheer us on our forward way, the hope that vanished faces, silent voices, and chilled hearts may yet awaken, and come back to us from out of the dead past, unto the life and love of Thy Resurrection!

Now, man, the past is dead. Bury it as you bury the sod with your ploughshare, that from it may spring forth a new life fruitful in blessing.

Look forward! The time will come at last for harvest, for happiness. In the time that has no tear, in the land that knows no winter, in the home that is without sorrow and without shadow, in the heaven that is without remorse and without regret, in the life where there is joy without sin, loveliness without stain, friendship without distrust, love without good-bye, we shall rest for ever from our labour and reap the harvest of our Plough.

Look forward to heaven. Yet, look, too, at the actual furrow you are tracing. You know the ground that has to be broken up. You see the near sod which your share must cleave. You may not know what you will have to do to-morrow, nor even what you may yet have to do to-day. But you know what you have to do at this moment. Look! the furrow is straight before you. Forward, then, in the name of God! Forward, like a true man! For 'no man putting his hand to the Plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God.'

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